

The Upanishads



TRANSLATED BY ALISTAIR SHEARER AND PETER RUSSELL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD LANNOY

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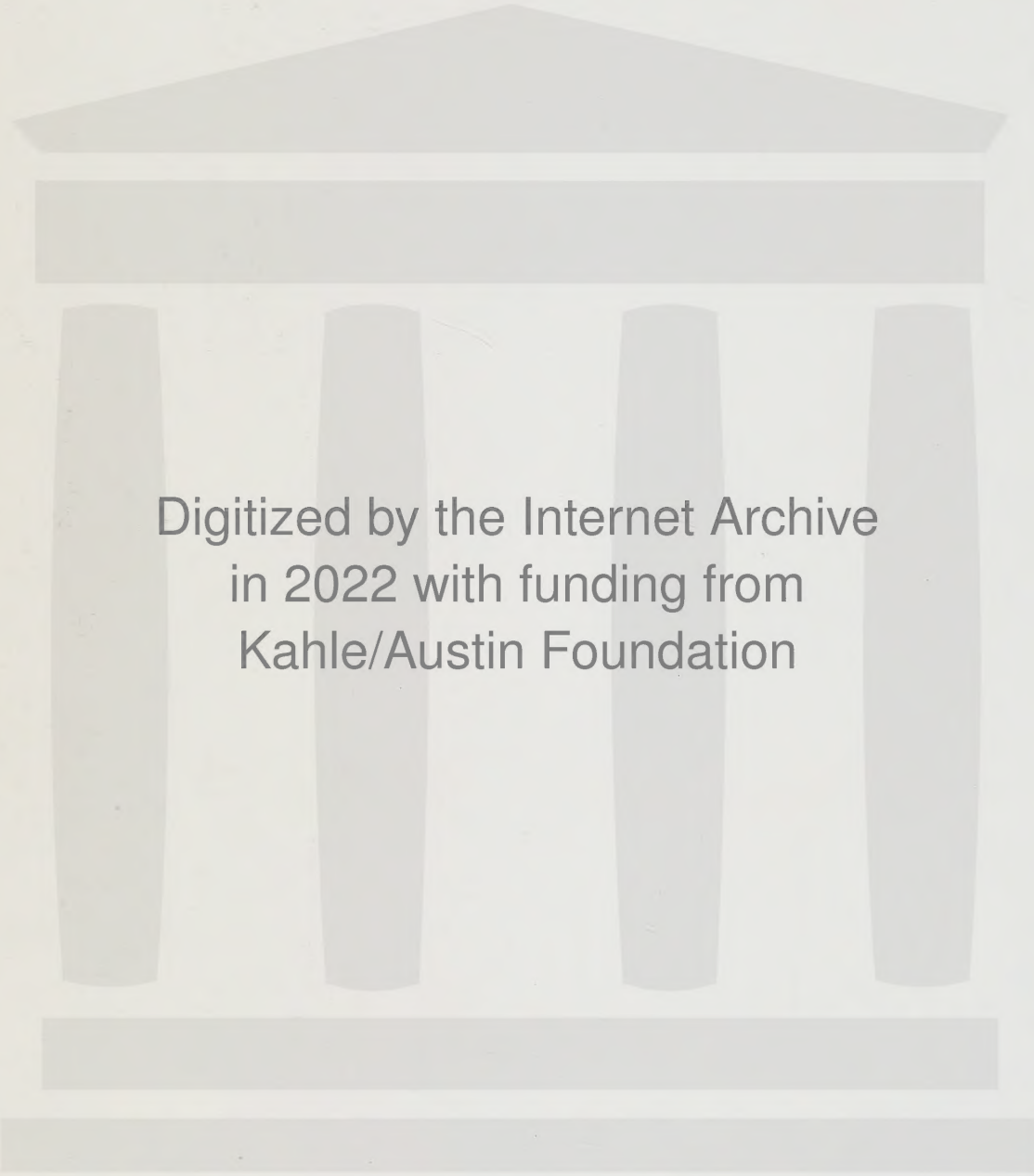
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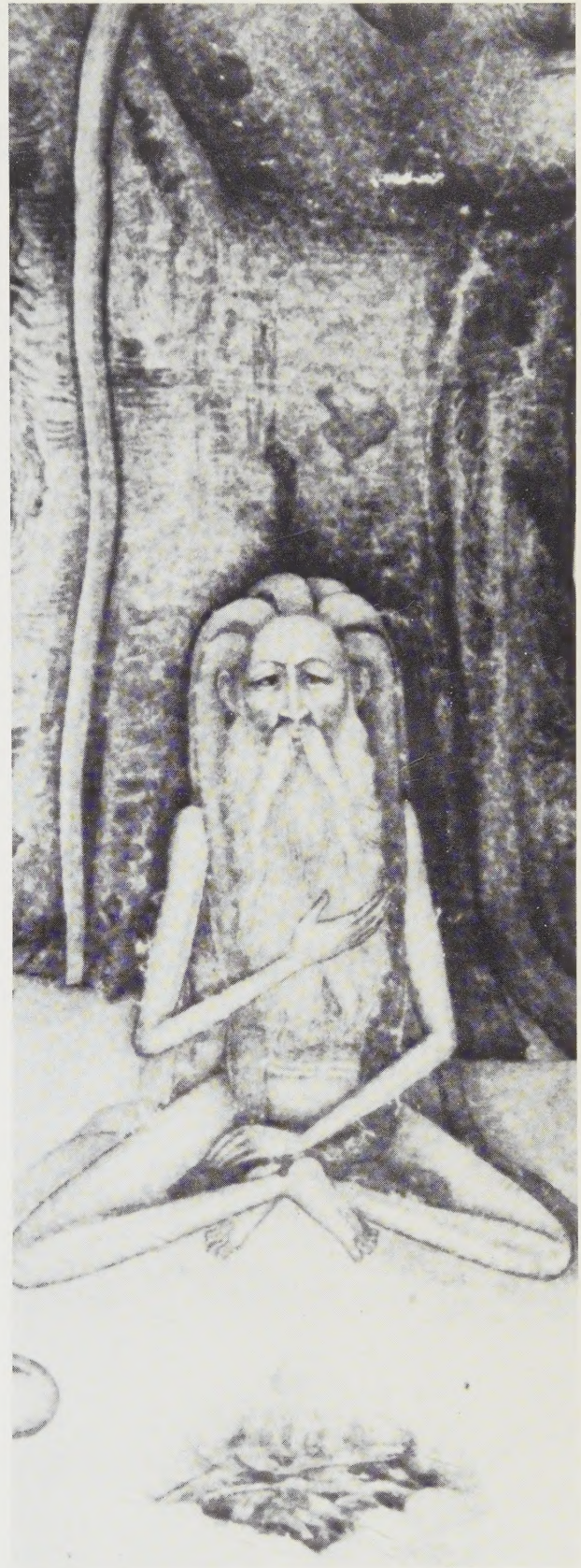
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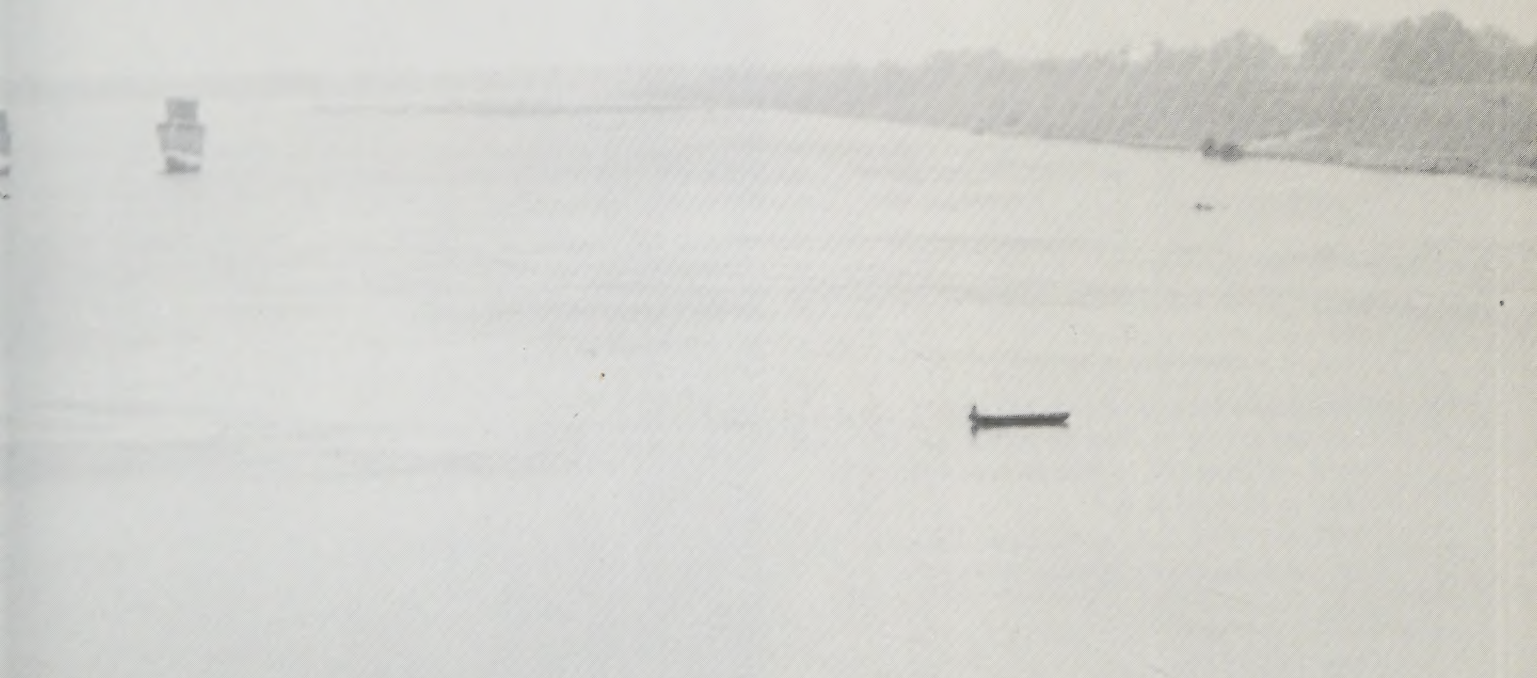




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Translated by ALISTAIR SHEARER & PETER RUSSELL

Photographs by RICHARD LANNOY



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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

Previous translations of the Upanishads have fallen into three main categories. Firstly there have been the literal and authoritative works of scholars such as Ernest Hume and Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan, who introduced the West to the richness of these ancient texts. Following these have come the less academic translations of Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, W.B. Yeats and Purohit Swami, and Juan Mascaró, which have brought the Upanishads to a wider audience. And lastly, running parallel to these two streams, there have been numerous translations and commentaries from within the Indian tradition itself. These have been the work of monks of various orders, the best known in the West being the collections of Swami Nikhilananda and Swami Gambhirananda. All of these have been of great value to us in our own understanding and appreciation of the Upanishads.

In producing a new translation our aim has been to present the essential teachings of the Upanishads in simple everyday language. This has meant considering the texts not as esoteric 'Indian philosophy' but as containing a teaching which is both universal and eternal. Thus they are just as relevant to the contemporary growing interest in higher states of consciousness as they were to India 3000 years ago. In our translation we have tried to preserve the beauty and meaning of the originals, while at the same time making clearer and more comprehensible what has often remained recondite and obscure.

The Upanishads are written in Sanskrit, the oldest member of the Indo-European family of languages. The word 'sanskrit' means literally 'that which has been adorned, decorated or transformed' and is usually translated as 'the perfected'. Remaining virtually unchanged for more than three thousand years, it has given cohesion to the variety of Indian civilisation. Above all it is the language of the Vedic scriptures, and because of this has always been regarded by orthodox tradition as the perfect language, the language of the gods. Indeed, the standard script is called 'devanagari', which

means 'the dwelling place of the gods', and proficiency in Sanskrit has traditionally been considered a sacred accomplishment.

Like many ancient languages, Sanskrit has a logical mathematical structure. Every word is divisible into component parts, most of which can in turn be traced to one of about 800 roots. These roots, the foundation of the language, are monosyllabic sounds representing general qualities of action. Moreover, they are said to constitute, as well as represent, the basic energies of the Universe. One root can have many meanings, which may be related or even contradictory. For example, the root RAM means: 'to be calm'; 'to rest'; 'to delight in'; or 'cause delight to'; 'to make love'; 'to join'; 'to make happy'; 'to play'; 'to be peaceful'; and also 'to stand still', or 'to stop'.

An analysis of a Sanskrit word or idea draws us from the expressed world of multiplicity to a more elemental and causal level, the field of the root. The concrete world of thought and action is seen to stem directly from a more abstract one. Sanskrit is the mediator between this causal area of potential action and the world of particular name, form and function.

The world view which shaped Sanskrit was a holistic one, and the language reflects this breadth of vision. Objects are defined in terms of their function; actors and actions are seen as inter-related parts of a greater whole. Thus the word *mushika* comes from the root MUSH, meaning 'to steal' and means 'that which steals', in this case a mouse. And, taking it a step further, the word *mushikarati*, a compound of *mushika* and *rati* (from the root RAM), means literally 'that which delights in, or stops the mouse' — in other words, a cat!

At a less domestic level, *mushika* is used to symbolise the Self, the unattached pure consciousness. For the Self, in assuming an identity in the world of particulars, 'steals' that which does not really belong to it. And hence *mushikarati* symbolises the realised man, one who 'enjoys the Self'.

The Indian mind sees manifestation as the play of polarities, and this dual nature of life is reflected in certain abstract nouns which contain both the meaning of their root and its opposite. For example, the concepts of *advaita* (unity), *aditi* (unboundedness) and *amrita* (immortality), which are central to the philosophy of the Upanishads, are clearly shown to embrace the ideas of *dvaita* (duality), *dita* (the bound) and *mriti* (death). Both aspects of life are seen to be inextricably linked and we are reminded that the Infinite contains within it the finite.

Although stable historically, Sanskrit is very fluid in usage. The same word may have several different meanings and can sometimes take opposite meanings according to context. Nouns and adjectives can be interchangeable, verbs are often omitted as understood. Philosophical Sanskrit is extremely aphoristic; one word in the original usually needs several English words to render it correctly — sometimes even a paragraph. Added to this, Indian tradition often analyses words symbolically rather than grammatically. Each syllabic sound is thought to have its own meaning, and thus the interpretation of a word when taken as a combination of symbolic syllables may be quite different from its etymological meaning.

This unique versatility makes Sanskrit ideally suited to suggesting subtle nuances and multiple associations, and to conveying different levels of meaning. A word or passage may be interpreted in a variety of ways, none of which need exclude the others. Thus the same text could be understood as a mythological story, a psychological treatise, a spiritual discourse, or a teaching on the Absolute — or all of these simultaneously. Throughout our translation we have tried to bring out what we feel to be the highest level of meaning. Nevertheless, whenever possible, we have attempted to preserve other levels of meaning, and so convey some of the variety and richness of the originals.

Since they contain many levels of meaning the Upanishads should be contemplated rather than just read. Moreover, coming from an oral tradition they were composed to be chanted and

memorised. Because of this they are often repetitive and incantatory and their power increases when read aloud.

Traditionally there are said to be 108 Upanishads. In fact, there are probably between two and three hundred altogether, many of the different religious sects having their own particular texts. The Upanishads vary widely in content and age. The earliest, the Brihadaranyaka, dates from about 800 BC, and the most recent ones were composed about two hundred years ago. Indeed, since Indian tradition is always prepared to incorporate genuine expressions of Truth, there is nothing to stop an Upanishad being written today.

There are thirteen principal Upanishads, and in our translation we have been primarily concerned with presenting an introduction to the basic teachings of these thirteen. We have started with complete translations of three of them, and followed these with selections from another six, choosing those portions which seem to us to sum up most succinctly aspects not included in the first three. We have omitted passages which are of secondary importance and those which are straight repetition or embellishment of themes already dealt with.

As far as possible we have left the texts to speak for themselves. The short introduction which precedes each selection is not intended as a commentary — that would require an enlightened commentator — but is intended to explain briefly any terms which may otherwise be obscure, and to provide a little background information. In this way we hope to stimulate further interest in the rich profusion of Indian thought, of which the Upanishads are both the foundation and the summit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: First and foremost we would like to thank Maharishi Mahesh Yogi for his wisdom and his teaching, which have guided us throughout.

We would also like to thank: Richard Lannoy for allowing us access to his superb collection of pictures, and for his discernment and sympathetic encouragement; Betty Tyers, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, for her painstaking and expert help; Philip Rawson for his inspiration and advice; Ajit Mookerjee for his timely comments; Dr W.G. Archer for making available prints from his private collection; Anthony O'Brian for his devanagari calligraphy; Vincent and Peggy Snell for their house in the country, solitude and Pooh-ji; Ruthie for food and feedback; Kim Taylor, who in addition to designing the book, gave us the benefit of his knowledge of the texts; and Oliver Caldecott for his sustained enthusiasm and perseverance in getting the book off the ground. All of these and many others have helped contribute to something which we hope will play its part in the coming Age of Enlightenment.



The word 'upanishad' is derived from the Sanskrit root SHAD, meaning 'to sit', 'to settle', or 'to approach', and from the prefixes UPA meaning 'near', and NI, meaning 'down'. An 'upanishad' is thus 'a sitting down near', and in the India of their composition, no less than today, the seeker of enlightenment approached a teacher, sat down at his feet and settled his mind to receive spiritual instruction.

Both pupil and teacher had to be well qualified for this instruction. The pupil was expected to be pure and receptive, 'one who is both calm and whose mind is quiet', the Mundaka Upanishad tells us. The teacher was to be both 'learned in the scriptures and established in Brahman', in other words, an enlightened being.

To realise the Infinite, whether it be called the Absolute, the Godhead, Brahman or the Self, is the goal of life. Thus the emphasis of the Upanishads is on experiencing the Absolute rather than learning about it intellectually.

The texts stress that there are two levels of knowledge: a lower and a higher. The lower covers the whole area of priestly expertise, which includes 'the sciences of pronunciation, ritual, grammar, etymology, metre and astronomy', whereas 'the higher is that through which the Eternal is directly experienced'. What is required for this experience is a mental 'settling down' — an upa-ni-shad — a turning of the attention inwards, away from the constantly changing world of everyday experience towards the silence of the Absolute beyond all thought.

The practice of meditation has always been central to the teaching of the Upanishads. It is through meditation that a person gains direct experience of the Infinite, and it is on the basis of this experience that he or she is better able to understand their message.

The Upanishads are a celebration of a state which lies beyond thought and the workings of the intellect. And as this transcendental realm is beyond words, any attempt to describe it must at best be 'a near approach' — an upanishad.

ॐ

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

O M

purnam adah

purnam idam

purmat purnam udacyate

purmasya purnam adaya purnam evavashishyate

O M

That is the Whole.

This is the Whole.

From wholeness emerges wholeness.

Wholeness coming from wholeness,
wholeness still remains.



The Isha is traditionally placed first in any collection of the Upanishads. Although short, a mere eighteen verses, it provides a succinct and balanced overview of both the path and the goal of the Upanishadic quest — enlightenment.

Throughout the history of human thought there have been those who have taught that we are usually aware of only the surface of life, the world of variety, but that there is also a deeper, all-pervading level which unifies this diversity. All the changing relative world is but an expression of this unchanging absolute level. To take either the Absolute or the relative on its own is to take a partial view of life; the wholeness of life comes from living the two together.

In the Upanishads this wholeness is known as brahman (from the root BRI meaning 'to grow', or 'to expand'). The relative world is the manifest aspect of brahman, the Absolute its unmani-

fest aspect. Everything has this unmanifest aspect within it, and as our own essential nature is therefore unmanifest brahman, there lies within us the possibility of experiencing it.

This essential nature is consciousness itself. It is pure consciousness, which as it vibrates becomes the substance of our thoughts and experiences. Pure consciousness is known as atman, the Self. This Self is not the personality or ego, but the unbounded underlying substratum of consciousness in which all thinking and experience, including that of an individual self or ego, takes place. Pure consciousness is not the contents of the mind, just as a beam of light is not the object it illuminates.

Awareness of the pure Self in meditation is known as samadhi, (literally, 'still mind'). Enlightenment is the state in which samadhi is maintained along with all activity. The surface levels of creation become translucent and one appreciates the Self in everything, and everything as the Self. The relative and the absolute aspects of brahman are both experienced in their completeness yet are simultaneously appreciated as one wholeness.

In Vedic literature the number 100 is often used to symbolise this state. The two zeros symbolise the fullnesses of the Absolute and the relative, and the one their unity. Thus when the Isha talks of 'aspiring to be one hundred' it is not just referring to living a long life, but also to living enlightenment.

The first part of the text might appear to advocate a path of renunciation and the need to withdraw from material life in order to cultivate the life of the spirit. But the withdrawal advocated is of a subtler kind. Samadhi comes not through forcibly restraining the mind, but through allowing it to 'enjoy the inner' during meditation, thereby spontaneously withdrawing from the world of change.

Returning to activity and infusing pure consciousness into everyday life is as important as meditation itself. The Isha emphasises that fulfilment comes from living both sides of life — a full material existence along with a full spiritual one.



At the heart of this phenomenal world,
within all its changing forms,
dwells the unchanging Lord.
So, go beyond the changing,
and, enjoying the inner,
cease to take for your self what to others
are riches.

Continuing to act in the world,
one may aspire to be one hundred.
Thus, and only thus, can a man be free
from the binding influence of action.

Unillumined indeed are those worlds clouded
by the blinding darkness of ignorance.
Into this death sink all those who slay the Self.

The one Self never moves,
yet is too swift for the mind.
The senses cannot reach It.
It is ever beyond their grasp.
Remaining still, It outstrips all activity,
Yet in It rests the breath of all that moves.

It moves, yet moves not.
It is far, yet It is near.
It is within all this,
And yet without all this.

He who sees everything as nothing but the Self,
and the Self in everything he sees,
Such a seer withdraws from nothing.
For the enlightened, all that exists is nothing
but the Self,
So how could any suffering or delusion continue
for those who know this Oneness?

He who pervades all, is radiant,
unbounded and untainted,
invulnerable and pure.
He is the knower, the one Mind,
omnipresent and self-sufficient.
He has harmonised diversity throughout eternal
time.

Into a blinding darkness go they who worship
action alone.

Into an even greater darkness go they who worship
meditation.

For It is other than meditation,
It is other than action.
This we have heard from the enlightened ones
who teach us.

Meditation and action —
He who knows these two together,
Through action leaves death behind
and through mediation gains immortality.

Into a blinding darkness go they who idolise
the Absolute.
Into an even greater darkness go they who dote
on the relative.

For It is other than the relative,
It is other than the Absolute.
This we have heard from the enlightened ones
who teach us.

Absolute and relative —
He who knows these two together,
Through the relative leaves death behind
and through the Absolute gains immortality.

The threshold of Reality is veiled by golden
light.
Reveal it, O Lord, for my dharma is to know
the Truth.

O Lord of Light, the knowing one,
the golden guardian, giver of life to all,
Spread apart thy rays, gather up thy brilliance,
That I may perceive thy finest and most
splendrous nature,
That cosmic spirit which lies at thy heart.
For I myself am That!

Let my breath merge with the cosmic breath,
May my body be as dust.
Remember, O mind, remember what has been
done.

Remember, O mind, remember what has been
done.

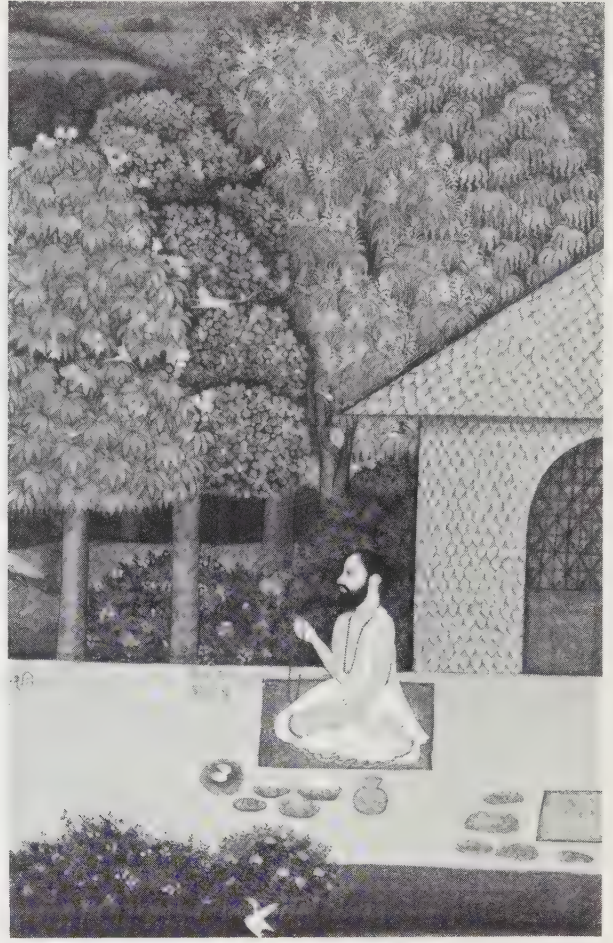
OM

Krato smara kritam smara

Krato smara kritam smara

O Agni, show us the right path,
lead us to eternal freedom,
Thou who knowest all.
May we not be diverted from our goal,
For with all devotion we submit ourselves
to Thee.





In Indian tradition sound is of primary importance. Sound is the Shakti, the creative energy, of the Absolute, and through the power of sound, vach, the whole Universe is created. The Rig Veda, mankind's oldest religious text, tells us:

*'First there is Brahman, Lord of all,
With whom is vach, the Word,
And the Word, verily, is Brahman.'*

The unstruck sound, the primordial vibration from which the rest of manifest creation emerges, is OM. OM creates and sustains the Universe, and at the end of each cosmic cycle the Universe returns to OM.

Every object, being essentially vibrating energy, has its own subtle form composed of sound. These sounds comprise the fundamental 'language of natural name' in which a perfect correlation exists between the name of any

object and its physical form. Knowledge of this relationship brings power over the subtle levels of creation.

Sanskrit is considered to be the nearest existing language to the language of natural name — hence its divine status in the Vedic tradition — and all other languages are considered to be, in varying degrees, corruptions of it.

To the Upanishadic sage the normal states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep are too unstable to allow any perception of Truth. Truth is that which is unchanging, and demands an equally unchanging consciousness to appreciate it.

Complete knowledge of an object requires complete knowledge of the subject, the knower. Thus the words 'knowledge' and 'knowing' (vidya) have a special meaning in the Upanishads. Vidya comes from the root VID, which contains not only the sense of knowing intellectually or being acquainted with, but also implies knowing fully, from the depths of one's being. 'Knowledge' is that state in which the infinite in the perceiver resonates with the infinite in the perceived. 'Knowledge' is enlightenment. To 'know' Brahman is to live Brahman.



OM,
The imperishable sound,
is the seed of all that exists.
The past, the present, the future,
— all are but the unfolding of OM.
And whatever transcends the three realms of
time,
that indeed is the flowering of OM.

This whole creation is ultimately Brahman.
And the Self,
this also is Brahman.

This pure Self has four quarters:

The first is the waking state,
experience of the reality common to everyone,
The attention faces outwards,
enjoying the world in all its variety.



The second is experience of subjective worlds,
such as in dreaming.
Here the attention dwells within,
charmed by the mind's subtler creations.

The third is deep sleep,
the mind rests, with awareness suspended.
This state beyond duality,
— from which the waves of thinking emerge,
is enjoyed by the enlightened as an ocean of
silence and bliss.

The fourth, say the wise, is the pure Self alone.
Dwelling in the heart of all,
it is the lord of all,
the seer of all,
the source and goal of all.

It is not outer awareness,
It is not inner awareness,
Nor is it a suspension of awareness.
It is not knowing,
It is not unknowing,
Nor is it knowingness itself.
It can neither be seen nor understood,
It cannot be given boundaries.
It is ineffable and beyond thought.
It is indefinable.
It is known only through becoming it.
It is the end of all activity,
silent and unchanging,
the supreme good,
one without a second.
It is the real Self.
It, above all, should be known.

This pure Self and OM are as one;
and the different quarters of the Self
correspond to OM and its sounds, A—U—M.

Experience of the outer world corresponds to A,
the first sound.

This initiates action and achievement.
Whoever awakens to this acts in freedom and
achieves success.

Experience of the inner world corresponds to U,
the second sound.

This initiates upholding and unification.
Whoever awakens to this upholds the tradition
of knowledge and unifies the diversities of life
Everything that comes along speaks to him of
Brahman.

The state of dreamless sleep corresponds to M,
the third sound.

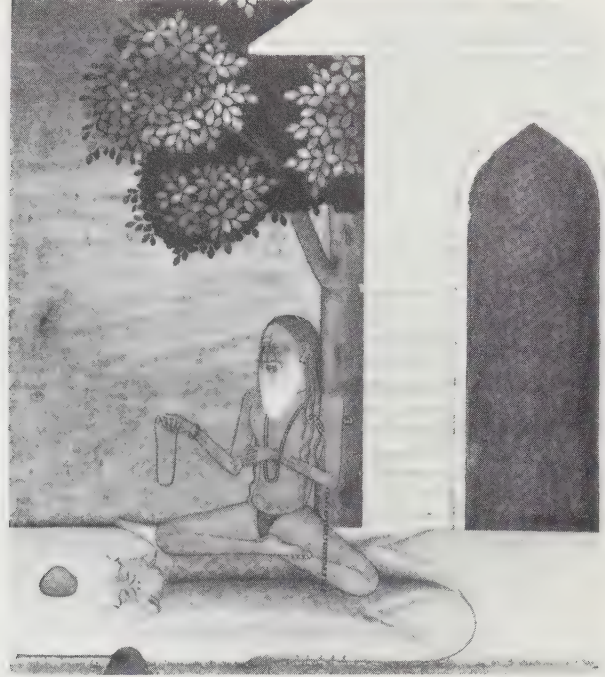
This initiates measurement and merging.
Whoever awakens to this merges with the world
and has the measure of all things.

The pure Self alone,
that which is indivisible,
which cannot be described,
the supreme good,
the one without a second,
That corresponds to the wholeness of OM.
Whoever awakens to that becomes the Self.









The Vedas are the oldest records of human thought. The word veda means 'knowledge', and the Vedas are said to be direct cognitions of the mechanics and structure of the Universe. These cognitions came to the ancient seers (rishis) in the language of natural name and are held to contain the seed form of all the various levels of manifestation. They are the DNA of the Universe.

The whole structure of creation is based on the same set of laws, time after time, cycle after cycle, and the codifications of these eternal laws are the Vedas. Hence the Vedas are eternal.

They have generally remained unfathomed by Western scholars for two reasons. Firstly, they are cognitions of sound and this fundamental value is inevitably reduced whenever they are written down, and completely lost in any translation. Secondly, they were cognised from an enlightened state of consciousness and need to be seen in this light. They are the records of perceptions not available to normal consciousness. Many of the sections which have been interpreted as mythology and ritual may also refer to subjective experiences of changes within the seer's own nervous system.

The Vedas are an oral tradition which has been handed down unchanged through an hereditary succession of pundits. They were only written down comparatively recently. Thus, although scholars consider them to date from about 1500 BC, tradition maintains that they go back to time immemorial.

The Upanishads are a distillation of the Vedic teaching. Whereas the Vedas deal more with the mechanics of the innumerable levels of existence, and with man's connection and communication with higher beings in the different strata of creation, the Upanishads are primarily concerned with the Absolute from which all existence has come.

Brahma is the first-born among the gods.

He is the creator of everything,
who, remaining hidden,
sustains all he has made.

He revealed the knowledge of Brahman,
the knowledge of the Absolute level of
existence,
the knowledge which is the foundation of
all other knowledge,
to the seer Atharva.

Atharva taught it to Angir, the brilliant one.

Angir passed it on to Satyavaha, son of
Bharadvaja, the swift one.

And Satyavaha, the conveyor of truth, taught
Angiras both the lower and higher knowledge.

There was once a renowned man of the world
named Shaunaka.

With customary reverence he approached
Angiras and asked:

‘Sir, what is that knowledge which is
the key to knowing everything?’

‘Those who know Brahman,’ Angiras replied,
‘say that there are two kinds of knowledge,
— the higher and the lower.

The lower is that of the four Vedas
— Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva,
and of the accompanying sciences:
pronunciation, ritual, grammar,
etymology, metre and astrology.

The higher is that through which the Eternal
is directly experienced.

That which cannot be seen and is beyond
thought,

which is without cause or parts,
which neither perceives nor acts,
which is unchanging, all-pervading, omni-
present,

subtler than the subtlest,

That is the Eternal which the wise know to be
the source of all.





Just as a spider spins forth its thread
and draws it in again,

The whole creation is woven from Brahman
and unto It returns.

Just as plants are rooted in the earth,
All beings are supported by Brahman.
Just as hair grows from a person's head,
So does everything arise from Brahman.

From its own meditation Brahman expands.
From this comes the life-force,
From the life-force universal Mind evolves.
Mind gives birth to the essential elements,
And from these the many worlds
and all their planes take form.

These worlds are the realms of action.
And through action comes the chance of
immortality.

From Brahman,
the all-seeing, the all-knowing,
whose meditation is infinite wisdom,
From this silent womb is born the Creator,
Brahma,
who moulds the swelling life-force
into matter, name and form.

This is the truth of the lower and the higher:

The rituals,
seen by the seers as the sacred verses,
are variously explained in the three Vedas.
Perform them constantly,
ye who desire truth,
for they are your path to the world of the
good.



When the sacred fire is kindled,
and the flame is rising,
Offer with devotion between the holy vessels.

If the sacrifice of fire is not followed
by that of the new moon
and that of the full moon,
by that of the four months
and that of the harvest:

If guests are not invited,
If offerings are not given,
or given wrongly,
If the gods are not invoked,
The seven worlds stay closed.

The flame has seven licking tongues:

Kali, the dark one,
the terrible,
the swift-as-thought,
the crimson one,
the smoky-coloured,
the sparkling one,
and Devi, she who takes all forms.

Whoever performs the sacrifice correctly,
when these seven are enlivened,
He is led by them,
as the rays of the sun,
to the world of the lord of the gods.

The radiant ones invite him,
“Come! Come!”
carrying him up on the rays of the sun.
They honour and glorify him, saying:
“This is the holy world of Brahma,
won by all your rituals.”



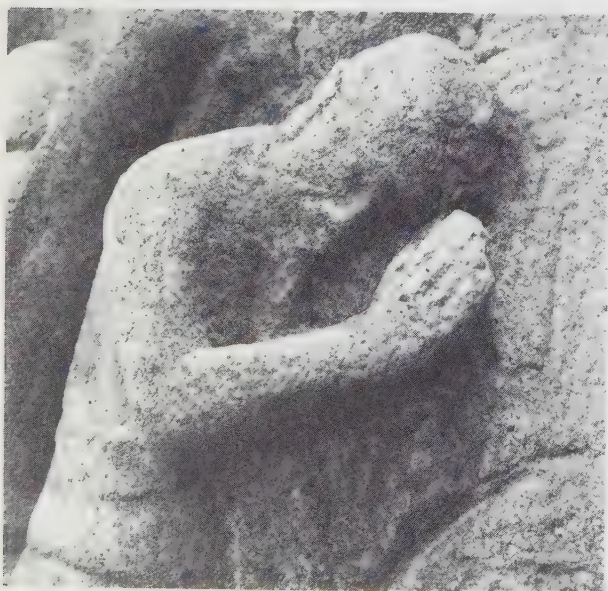
But verily, these rituals are unsafe boats,
They cannot reach the farthest shore.
The Vedic sciences are but the lower
knowledge.

The ignorant,
who take them as the higher,
sink once more into old age and death.

Though they think themselves wise and learned
they are fools lost in ignorance,
a prey to suffering,
wandering without direction,
like the blind led by the blind.

These ignorant children,
bound by duality,
think their journey has ended.
Blinded by attachment,
they fail to see the Truth.

These deluded souls,
taking rituals and merit as the highest,
know nothing of the higher.
Even though they have won enjoyment in the
highest heaven,
they must still come back to this world,
or even go to a lower one.





But they who live in the forest,
faithfully following a life of meditation,
They are the knowers,
tranquil, living on charity.
Free from attachment,
they leave the body through the gate of the
sun,
and reach the supreme Self,
the imperishable Spirit.

Looking on those worlds won by ritual,
a true Brahmin arrives at dispassion.
For that which is not made
comes not through what is done.

For the gift of this knowledge
approach a master,
one both learned in the scriptures
and established in Brahman.



To him who has properly approached,
kindling in hand,
whose mind is calm and quiet,
Let the teacher impart in its fullness the
knowledge of Brahman.
that which leads to the imperishable Spirit,
the Truth.

This is the Truth.
Thousands of sparks leap from a blazing fire,
yet each separate and individual spark
remains in essence one with the fire,
Just so, my friend, all beings arise from the
imperishable Purusha,
and in time return to It.

Purusha is the shining,
yet formless cosmic spirit,
the Self of the Universe.
He is within everything,
and without everything,
unborn,
untainted by either breath or mind.
He is beyond even the tendency to take form.

From Him are born breath,
mind and the senses,
And in their turn ether,
air, light, water,
and lastly earth, the foundation of all.

Light is His head,
the sun and moon His eyes,
space His ears,
the Vedas His voice,
the wind His breath,
the whole world His heart,
and the ground His feet.
Truly He is the innermost essence of all that
exists.

From Him comes energy,
whose burning is the sun.
From this comes Soma,
and from the Soma rain.
And from this come the plants and food.

Nourished by them,
the male pours seed into the female.
Thus the whole multitude of beings come
ultimately from Him.

From Him arise all hymns and chants,
all rituals and initiations,
all ceremonies and offerings,
the sacred calendar and priesthood,
and the many worlds of the after-life.

From Him are born the many deities.
From Him are born the angelic beings,
and man,
and the beasts and birds,
and the rice and corn,
and the very air we breathe.
From Him come meditation, stability,
purity, order and Truth.

From Him have sprung the seven gates of sense
— the eyes, the ears, the nostrils and the
mouth,
The seven senses' spheres,
The seven sense perceptions,
The seven kinds of knowledge stemming from
the senses,
And the seven subtle centres shining in the
body.



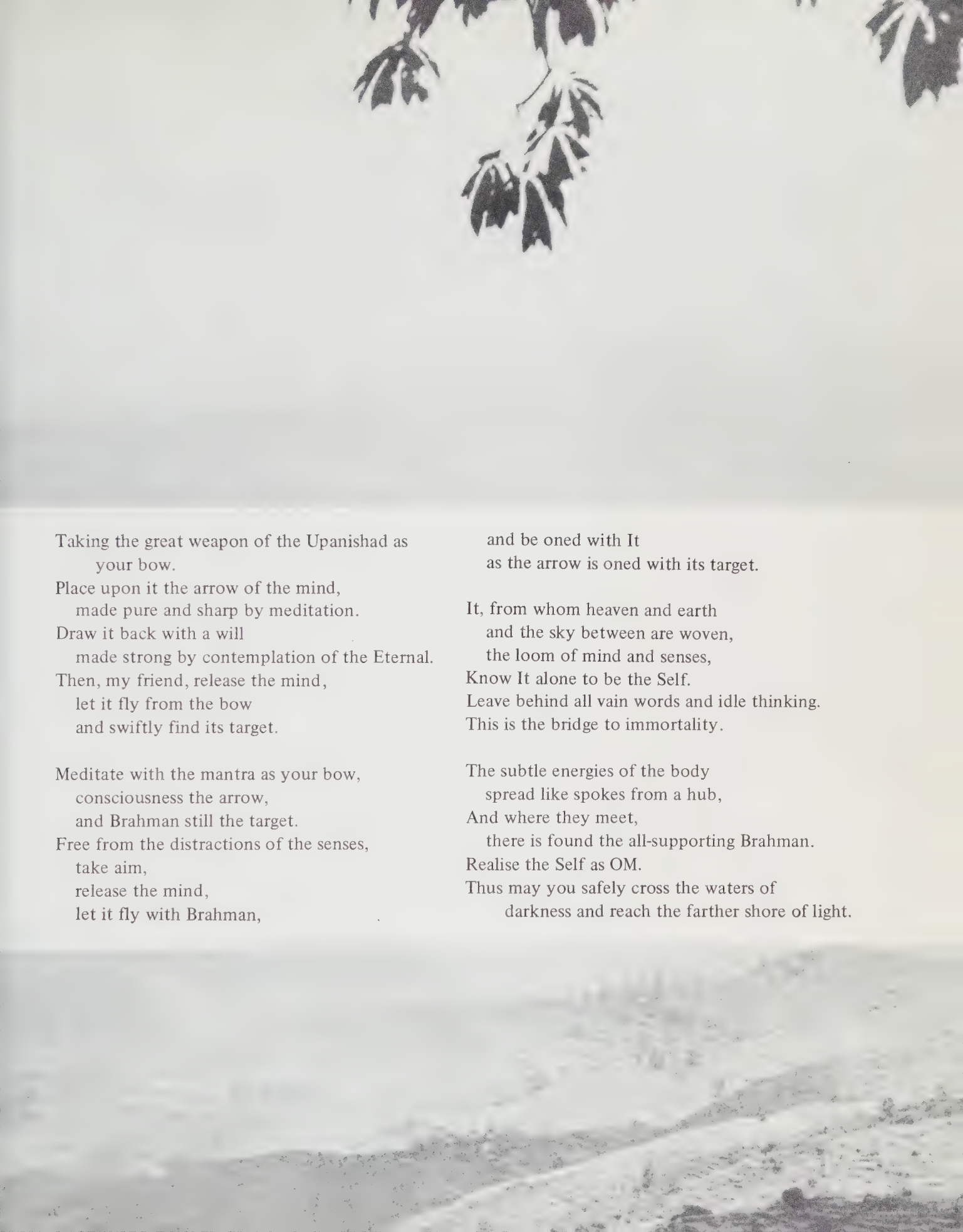
From Him arise the mountains and the seas.
From Him spring rivers of every kind.
And from Him have come the herbs and juices
which sustain our very being.

Purusha is truly the whole Universe,
the immortal source of all creation,
all action, all meditation.
Whoever discovers Him, hidden deep within,
cuts through the bonds of ignorance
— even during his life on earth.

At the core of all
stirs the hidden pulse of Brahman.
It is the heart of everything
— all that moves or breathes or blinks.
That which is both Being and non-Being,

the goal of all desiring,
beyond all understanding,
Know that, my friend,
to be the quintessence of life.

That which is shining,
subtler than the subtlest,
in which the many worlds and their
inhabitants have their being,
That is the imperishable Brahman.
It is Life,
It is speech,
It is mind.
It is the Real.
It is immortality.
It, above all, you should know.
So, dear Shaunaka, know It.



Taking the great weapon of the Upanishad as
your bow.

Place upon it the arrow of the mind,
made pure and sharp by meditation.

Draw it back with a will
made strong by contemplation of the Eternal.

Then, my friend, release the mind,
let it fly from the bow
and swiftly find its target.

Meditate with the mantra as your bow,
consciousness the arrow,
and Brahman still the target.

Free from the distractions of the senses,
take aim,
release the mind,
let it fly with Brahman,

and be oned with It
as the arrow is oned with its target.

It, from whom heaven and earth
and the sky between are woven,
the loom of mind and senses,
Know It alone to be the Self.
Leave behind all vain words and idle thinking.
This is the bridge to immortality.

The subtle energies of the body
spread like spokes from a hub,
And where they meet,
there is found the all-supporting Brahman.
Realise the Self as OM.
Thus may you safely cross the waters of
darkness and reach the farther shore of light.



The Self is all-knowing,
it is all-understanding,
and to it belongs all glory.
It is pure consciousness,
dwelling in the heart of all,
in the divine citadel of Brahma.
There is no space it does not fill.

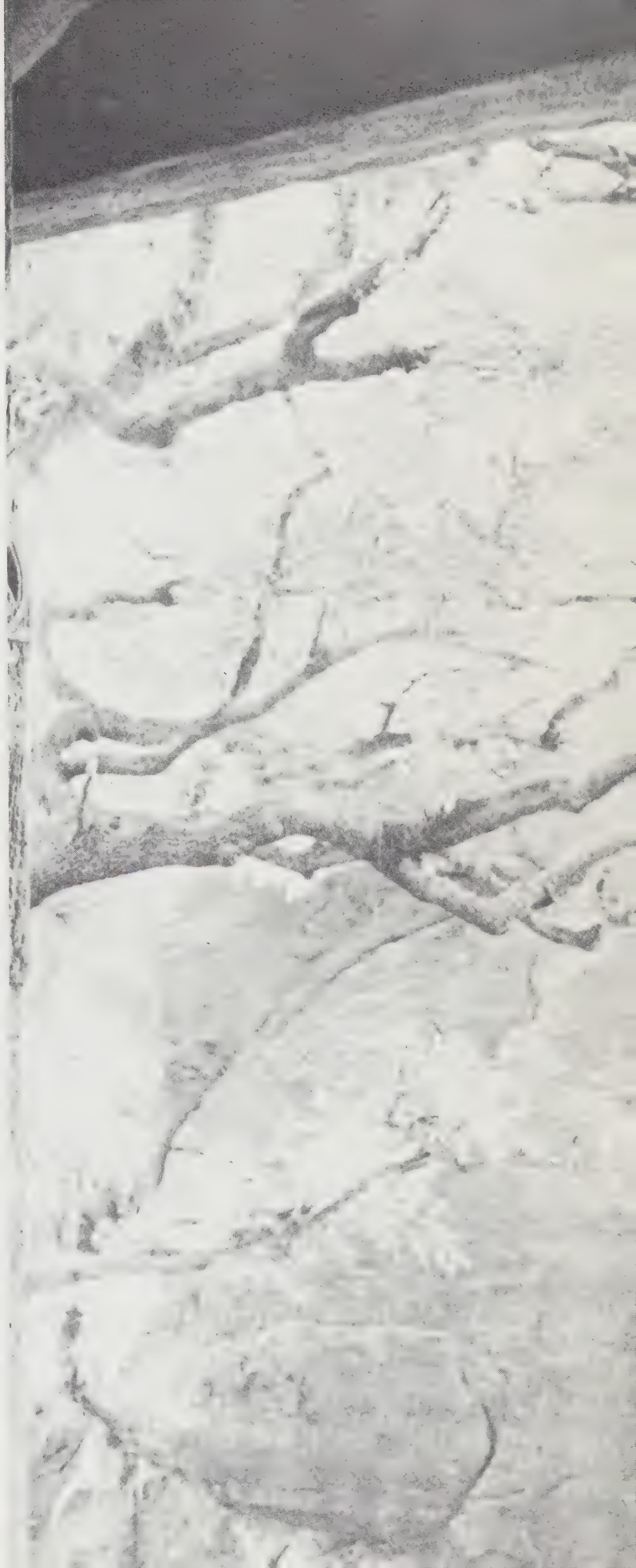
Dwelling deep within,
it manifests as mind,
silently directing the body and the senses.
The wise behold this Self,
blissful and immortal,
shining forth through everything.

When It is seen to be
both the higher and the lower,
all doubts and uncertainties dissolve.
The knot of the heart is loosed.
One is no longer bound to action or its fruits.

The golden realms of the celestial are the
subtlest levels of life.
Within them lies Brahman.
Pure, indivisible, brilliant,
It is the light of lights.
They who know the Self know this.

It is not lit by the light of the sun,
nor by the light of the moon,
nor by stars,
nor by lightning,
and certainly not by fire.
Only through Its light do all these others shine.
It is the light of the world
And by Its shining all is seen.

Brahman is immortal.
It stretches before and behind,
to the left and to the right,
above and below.
It truly is the whole Universe.
It is supreme.



Two birds,
inseparable companions,
perch on the same tree.
One eats the fruit,
the other looks on.

The first bird is our individual self,
feeding on the pleasures and pains of this
world;
The other is the universal Self,
silently witnessing all.

The individual self,
immersed in the world of change,
deluded,
laments its lack of freedom.
But when it discovers the Lord,
full of dignity and power,
It is freed from all its suffering.

So, when you meet the golden Lord,
the creator,
the universal spirit,
the source of Brahma himself,
Then, knowing the highest,
untainted by good or evil,
you will have reached the supreme.



Truly, Brahman is Life itself
shining through all beings.
Knowing It the wise can talk of nothing else.
And he who
swimming in the bliss of the Self,
delighting in its play,
still enjoys a life of action,
He is the greatest of those who know Brahman.

When the mind and body have been purified
through meditation, through Truth,
through understanding and simplicity,
Then the perfected behold the Self,
pure and brilliant.

The unchanging prevails, not the changing.
The unchanging alone brings lasting fulfilment.
The unchanging knowledge is the divine path
which takes the wise to Truth.

Beyond all conception,
the one light shines forth.
It is the Great.
It is smaller than the smallest,
farther than the farthest,
nearer than the nearest.
The wise know It resting deep within.

The eyes cannot see It,
Speech cannot describe It,
Nor any sense perceive It.
It is not attained by effort,
Nor through austerities.
Only when meditation has purified the mind
can you know the One beyond all divisions.

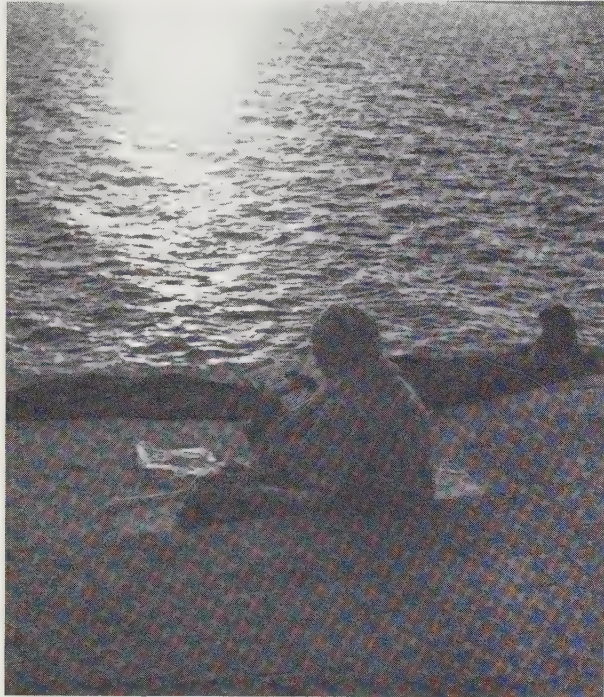
The mind is kept ever active by the senses.
When they have withdrawn
and the mind become still,
Then the subtle Self shines forth.

When the mind rests steady and pure,
then whatever you desire
those desires are fulfilled,
and whatever you think of
those thoughts materialise.
So, you who desire good fortune
revere the knower of the Self.

He who knows the Self
knows the supreme abode of Brahman,
in which the universe lies resplendent.
The wise,
free from all desire,
devoted to this cosmic spirit,
cast off all attachment.



Whilst you remain attached to action
you are bound by your desires
and must be reborn continually
— both during life and after death.
But when you find the Self
the goal of all desiring
you leave both birth and death behind.



This Self cannot be realised by studying the
scriptures,
nor through the use of reason,
nor from the words of others
— no matter what they say.
By the grace of the Self is the Self known,
The Self reveals Itself.

It cannot be attained by the weak,
nor by the half-hearted,
nor by a mere show of detachment.
But as strength, stability, and inner freedom
grow,
so does Self-awareness grow.

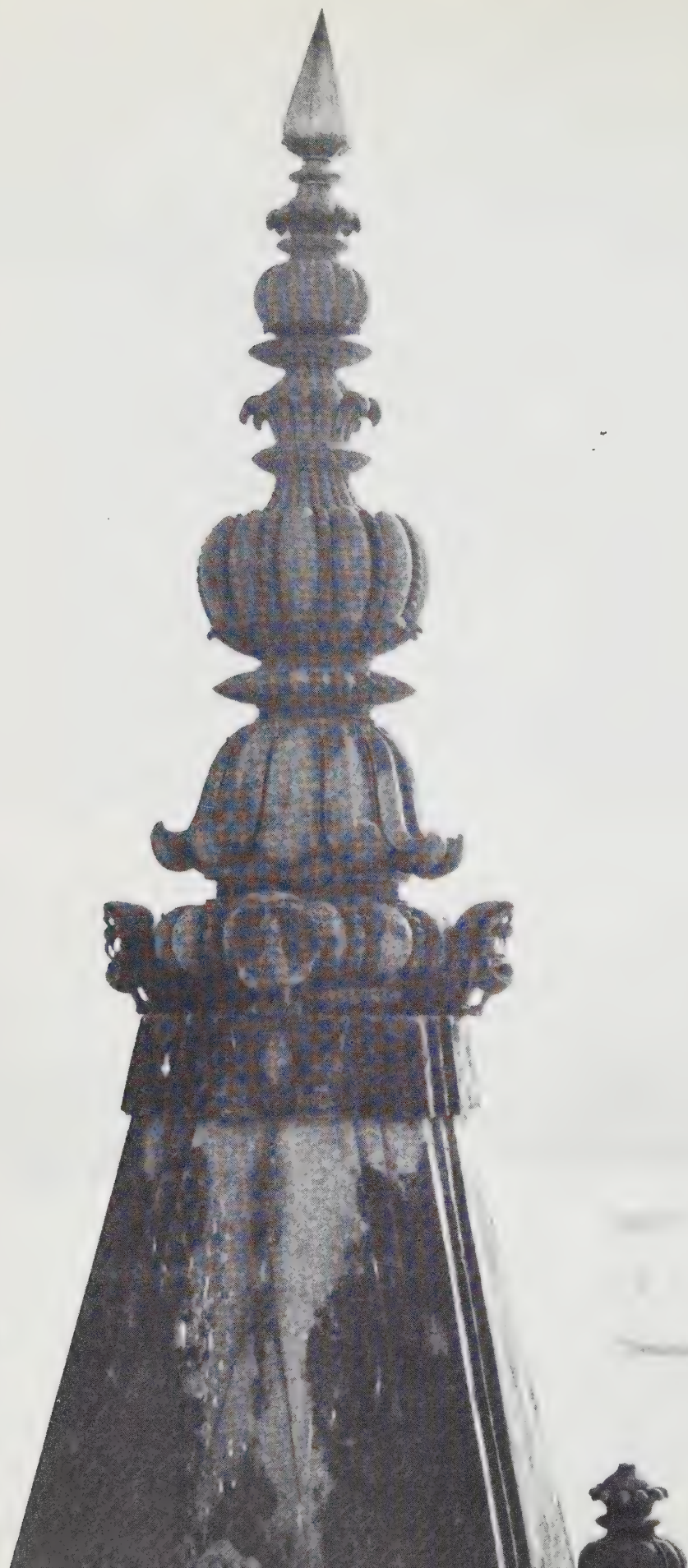
Having realised the Self,
the wise find satisfaction.
Their evolution complete,
at peace, and free from longing,
they are at one with everything.

This supreme union is the end of the Vedanta.
The wise,
the unattached who live this state,
are immortal,
And when they die remain united with the One.

At the time of death,
touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing
dissolve into their deities,
and the five pranas return to their source.
The individual's soul and all his deeds
join with the supreme, the Immortal.

As rivers flow into the sea,
losing their individuality,
So the enlightened,
no longer bound by name and form,
merge with the Infinite,
the radiant cosmic Being.





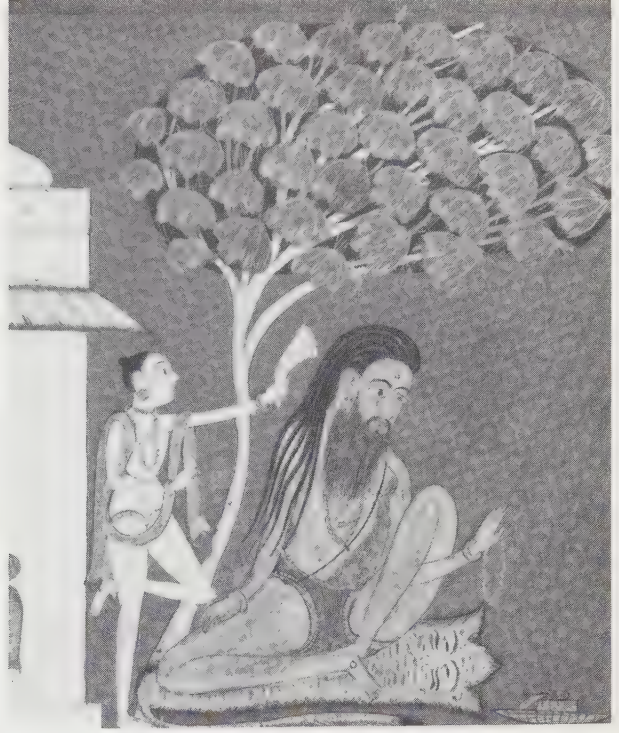
Truly, he who knows Brahman becomes
Brahman,
And all his descendants become knowers of
Brahman.
He transcends suffering and the influence of
evil.
Free from the chains of ignorance he enjoys
immortality.'

This knowledge may be taught
only to those who perform the rites,
only to those who are learned in the scripture,
only to those who with devotion surrender
themselves,
only to those who are established in Brahman.
To these alone and no-one else.

That is the teaching of Brahman,
expounded in ancient times
by Angiras to Shaunaka.

All glory to the great seers!
All glory to the great seers!





The world of Vedic India was a sacred one in which every action was understood as part of the cosmic order. The ancient sages saw the Universe as an eternal ritual of sacrifice. It is the self-sacrifice of the Absolute which gives birth to the relative and the very nature of life is one of transformation of energies. Every aspect of creation, divine or human, reflects this transformation.

We cannot live without taking part in this cosmic ritual, both as instrument and as victims, and it is through his conscious participation in the sacrificial ritual that cosmic order is maintained.

The seers taught that the Universe is maintained by a hierarchy of energies known as devas (literally 'the shining ones'). These are the causal energies from which the subtle and gross worlds evolve, and are personified as the numerous divine beings of Vedic mythology. The devas, although diverse and often of opposing natures, are just the different aspects and subdivisions of the one absolute causal energy.

The whole of manifestation is a chain of subtle correspondences, and it is through ritual, correctly performed, that these subtle correspondences can be enlivened and the human linked with the divine.

The Brihadaranyaka ('the great forest teaching') is the oldest of the Upanishads, dating from about 800 BC. It is also the longest, containing over 400 verses, many of them of great length. Nearly all the Upanishadic teachings can be found in seed form within the Brihadaranyaka.





OM

Verily,

The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn,
Its eye the sun,
Its breath the wind,
Its open mouth the cosmic fire.
The body of the sacrificial horse is time,
Its back the heavens,
Its belly is space,
And its hoof the ground.
Its flanks are the four points of the compass,
And its ribs their midpoints.
Its legs are the seasons,
Their joints the months and fortnights,
And its feet the days and nights.
Its bones are the stars,
Its flesh the clouds.

The rivers are its arteries,
The mountains its liver and lungs.
The sand is its dung,
And the trees and grasses its hair.
Its front part is the sun as it rises
And its rear the sun as it sets.
Its shaking is the thunder,
Its yawning is the lightning,
Its pissing is the rain,
And its neighing is sound.
Its front part, rising from the seas of the East,
is the golden day,
And its rear, rising from the seas of the West,
is the silver night.
These two oceans are the sacrificial vessels
before and behind the horse.
Its source is the cosmic waters,
And they are its kin.
As a steed it bore the gods.
As a stallion it bore the celestial beings.
As a hunter it bore the demons.
And as a horse it bore man.

1.1.1–1.1.2

In the beginning was the Self alone,
Purusha, the Almighty One.
In previous times (*purva*)
he burnt up (*ush*) all evil.
Thus he is called Purusha.
With this knowledge one devours all rivals.

Purusha spoke, saying 'I am',
and thus was I-ness born.
And even now, when a person is asked 'Who is
it?'
he replies first 'It is I',
and then adds his name.

But then Purusha became frightened,
— as even now we become frightened when
alone.
He thought to himself:
'Since there is nothing but myself,
what is there to be frightened of?'
Thereupon his fears dissolved,
as he realised they were groundless.
For verily,
fear is born of duality.

But still he was not happy,
for there is no happiness in being alone.
He wanted a companion.
So he grew as large as a man and a woman
entwined,
and then divided himself in two,
creating a husband and a wife.
(For, as Yajnavalkya used to say,
this body is but half of oneself,
the other half is woman.)
Thus his emptiness was filled by a woman.
They came together again,
and from their union were born all people.

But then the woman thought:
'How could he join with me when he has
created me from himself?
I must hide.'
So she took the form of a cow,
But he took the form of a bull,
and joined with her again,
And from their union were born all cows.

Then she took the form of a mare,
But he took the form of a stallion,
and joined with her again.

Then she took the form of a she-ass,
But he took the form of a he-ass,
and joined with her again.
And from their union were born all hoofed
animals.

Then she took the form of a nanny goat,
But he took the form of a billy goat,
and joined with her again.
And from their union were born all goats.

Then she took the form of a ewe,
But he took the form of a ram,
and joined with her again.
And from their union were born all sheep.

In this way he created the male and female of
all creatures
— even down to the ants.

Then he thought:
'Truly, I am the whole creation,
for I have created everything from my own
Self.'

Hence he is called *Shrishti*, the creator.
Whoever awakens to this
becomes as great as Purusha in his own
creation.

1.IV.1 — 1.IV.5.





Now Prajapati, the father of all,
created for himself
the trinity of mind, speech and breath:

It is the mind that sees,
And the mind that hears,
For we say:
‘I did not see it, my mind was elsewhere,’
‘I did not hear it, my mind was elsewhere.’
Desire, imagination, doubt,
faith and lack of faith,
stability and instability,
shame, reasoning and fear,
All these are just the mind.
And even if we are touched from behind,
it is the mind that notices.

Whatever sound there is, is ultimately speech,
for all that can be expressed has its origin in
speech.

There are five types of breath:
prana, the forward breath,
apana, the downward breath,
vyana, the diffusing breath,
samana, the assimilating breath,
and udana, the ascending breath.
These five are but aspects of Prana,
the breath of Life itself.

Truly,
mind, speech and breath
together make up the self.



These three are also the three worlds:

Speech is this expressed world.
Mind is the inner world.
And breath is the world beyond.

These three are also the Vedas:

Speech is the Rig Veda.
Mind is the Yajur Veda.
And breath is the Sama Veda.

These three are also the gods, the ancestors
and men:

Speech is the gods.
Mind is the ancestors.
And breath is men.

These three are also the father, the mother
and children:

Mind is the father.
Speech is the mother.
And breath is the children.

These three are what is known,
what is to be known,
and what will remain unknown:

Whatever is known is a form of speech,
for speech is the expression of knowledge.
And knowledge is Saraswati,
protecting all who know her.



And whatever is yet to be known is a form of
mind,
for mind is to be known.
And Brahma is the thought form from which the
universe arises,
protecting all who know him.

And whatever remains unknown is a form of
breath,
for breath remains unknown.
And presiding over breath is Vayu, the wind,
protecting all who know him.

The Earth is the body of Saraswati
and this fire her shining form.
And as far as speech extends,
the Earth and fire extend.

The Heavens are the body of Brahma,
and the sun his shining form.
And as far as mind extends,
the sun and heavens extend.

Brahma and Saraswati came together
and from their union Vayu was born.
Vayu is Indra, the ruler of Heaven, unrivalled.
— for rivalry comes only from a second.
Whoever knows the meaning of this has no rival.

Water is the body of Vayu
and his shining form is the moon.
And as far as breath extends,
the waters and moon extend.

All three are equal and eternal.
He who worships them as finite
wins only a finite world.
But he who worships them as infinite
attains the world of infinity.

1.V.3—1.V.13

Janaka, the king of Videha, had a sacrifice performed at which many gifts were distributed to the officiating priests. A great number of Brahmins from the lands of Kuru and Pauchala were gathered there for the occasion.

Now it happened that the king wished to find out which of these wise men was the most learned in Vedic lore. So he had a thousand cows put in a pen, and from the horns of each cow were hung ten gold coins.

“Venerable Brahmins,” he announced, “whichever of you is the most learned may take these cows home with him.”

But not one of the Brahmins dared step forward.

Then the sage, Yajnavalkya, turned to his pupil, Samasravas, and said, “Drive these cows home for me, my dear.” So Samasravas drove them away.

The assembled Brahmins were furious: “How dare he call himself the most learned among us!” and each of them resolved to test Yajnavalkya on his knowledge.

3.1.1–3.1.2



Ashvala, the Hotri priest, asked how those who perform the sacrifices obtain freedom, and examined him on the details of the sacrificial chants and oblations, the divinities and the hymns of praise.

Artabhaga, from the Jaratkarus, questioned him on the senses and their objects, and then on the nature of death.

Bhujyu, grandson of Lahya, asked him about the fate of those who perform the horse sacrifice. And then Ushasta, son of Chakra, and Kahola, son of Kushitaki, questioned him on the nature of Brahman, the Self of all beings.

After he had answered each of these questions satisfactorily, Gargi, the daughter of Vachaknu, stepped forward:

‘Yajnavalkya,’ she asked, ‘if this whole world is woven warp and weft from water, from what is water woven, warp and weft?’

‘It is woven from air, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what is air woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the Heavens, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what are the Heavens woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the realms of the Gandharvas, the celestial musicians, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what are the realms of the Gandharvas woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the realms of the sun, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what are the realms of the sun woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the realms of the moon, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what are the realms of the moon woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the realms of the stars, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what are the realms of the stars woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the realms of the gods, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what are the realms of the gods woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the realm of Indra, the prince of gods, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what is the realm of Indra woven, warp and weft?’

‘From the realm of Prajapati, the father of all, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what is the realm of Prajapati woven, warp and weft?’

‘From Brahmaloka, the realm of the Creator, O Gargi.’

‘Then from what is Brahmaloka woven, warp and weft?’

‘O Gargi,’ replied Yajnavalkya, ‘do not ask so many questions, lest your head fall off. You are asking too much about that divinity of whom we should not ask.’

Thereupon Gargi stepped down and held her peace.

3.VI.1



Then Uddalaka, son of Aruna, came forward and questioned him on the many different worlds and their relationships, and on the Self, their inner controller.



After Yajnavalkya had satisfied Uddalaka in full Gargi returned to question him again. This time she asked him about the nature of space, and then about the Imperishable itself.

Following her Vidagdha, from the family of Shakalya, approached him asking:

‘How many devas are there, Yajnavalkya?’ Yajnavalkya replied by quoting the Rig Veda:

‘As many as are mentioned in the Nivid, the hymn to all the gods; that is three hundred and three, and three thousand and three.’

‘Yes, Yajnavalkya, but how many devas are there really?’

‘Thirty-three.’

‘Yes, Yajnavalkya, but how many devas are there really?’

‘Six.’

‘Yes, Yajnavalkya, but how many devas are there really?’

‘Three.’

‘Yes, Yajnavalkya, but how many devas are there really?’

‘Two.’

‘Yes, Yajnavalkya, but how many devas are there really?’

‘One-and-a-half.’

‘Yes, Yajnavalkya, but how many devas are there really?’

‘One.’

‘Very well, Yajnavalkya, now tell me who those three hundred and three, and three thousand and three devas are.’

‘In fact,’ Yajnavalkya replied, ‘there are just thirty-three devas. All the others are but different forms of these thirty-three.’

‘And who are these thirty-three?’

‘They are the eight Vasus,
the eleven Rudras,
the twelve Adityas,
— that makes thirty-one.
And Indra and Prajapati make thirty-three.’

‘And who are the eight Vasus?’

‘Agni, the fire,
and his consort Prithivi, the earth.
Vayu, the wind,
and his consort Antariksha, the sky.
Aditya, the sun,
and his consort Dyau, the heavens.
Chandrama, the moon,
and Nakshatra, the stars.
In them this world dwells (*vas*),
hence they are called the Vasus.’





‘Then tell me who the three devas are.’
 ‘The three worlds — earth, space and the heavens
 — within them these other devas have their
 being.’

‘And who are the two devas?’
 ‘Matter and Life.’

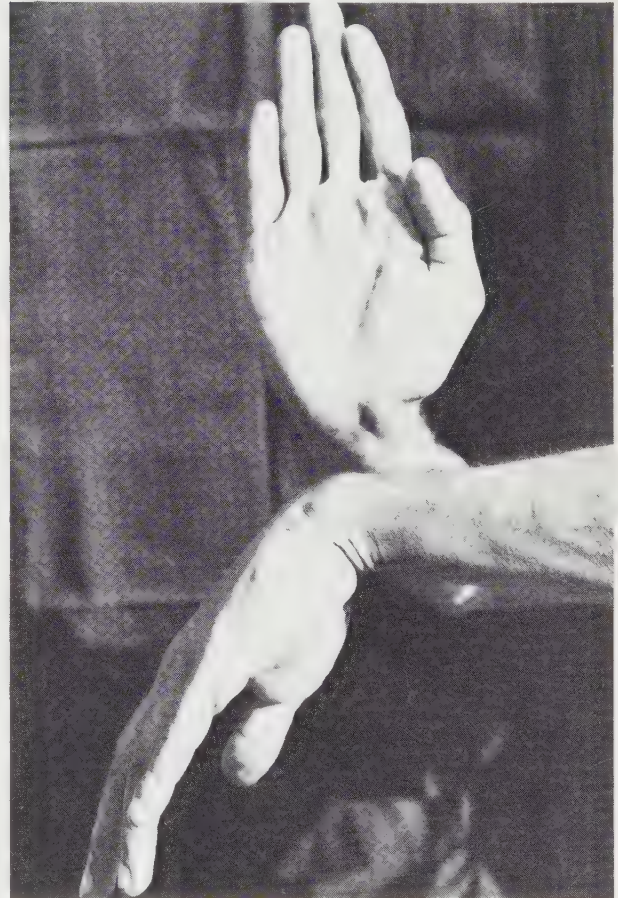
‘And who are the one-and-a-half devas?’
 ‘He who purifies.’
 But then the assembled priests objected saying:
 ‘He who purifies is one. How then can he be
 called one-and-a-half (*adhyardha*)?’
 To which Yajnavalkya replied,
 ‘It is because of him that this whole world
 evolved (*adhyardhnot*),
 hence he is called Adhyardha.’

‘And who are the eleven Rudras?’
 ‘They are the pranas of the five organs of sense,
 and the pranas of the five organs of action.
 These make ten, and the soul is the eleventh.
 When they depart from this mortal body
 they make us weep (*rud*),
 hence they are called the Rudras.’

‘And who are the twelve Adityas?’
 ‘They are the twelve months of the year,
 the spokes of the wheel of time.
 And as they turn
 they carry the whole world along (*ada*)
 hence they are called the Adityas.’

‘And who is Indra, and who is Prajapati?’
 ‘Indra is the thunder, and Prajapati the sacrifice.’
 ‘And what is the essence of thunder?’
 ‘The thunderbolt.’
 ‘And what is the essence of the sacrifice?’
 ‘The offerings.’

‘Now, Yajnavalkya, who are those six devas?’
 ‘Agni, Prithivi, Vayu, Antariksha, Aditya and
 Dyau,
 These are the six
 — the whole world is made from them.’



‘And who then is the one god?’
 ‘The life-breath, which they call Brahman, or
 THAT.’

3.IX.1–3.IX.9



When Shakalya had at last finished, Yajnavalkya turned to the assembled Brahmins and said:

‘O venerable Brahmins, if any one of you wish to question me further you may do so, or all of you together may question me. Or I will question any one of you who wishes me to, or I will question all of you together.’

Brahman is knowledge!

Brahman is bliss!

Brahman is the goal of those who make offerings

and of those who still the mind and know.’

3.IX.28

But not one of the Brahmins dared accept his challenge. Thus was Yajnavalkya proved the wisest among them. But before he departed Yajnavalkya gave them this riddle:

‘Man is like a mighty tree,
his hair the leaves,
his skin the bark.

Blood flows through his skin,
as sap flows through the bark.
A wounded man bleeds blood
as an injured tree seeps sap.

His flesh is like the inner bark,
his nerves its fibrous threads.
His bones are like the wood within,
his marrow’s as the pith.

A tree when felled
sprouts again from the root.
But from what root is man reborn
when he’s cut down by death?

Do not say from the semen,
for that comes from the living
— as trees spring up from seeds
of trees that have not died.

A tree will sprout anew,
so long as its roots remain.
But from what root is man reborn
when he’s cut down by death?

Once born, he’s never really born again,
for who could recreate him?





Now Yajnavalkya had two wives, Maitreya and Katyayani. Maitreya loved to discuss enlightenment, while Katyayani was more interested in womanly things. When the time had come to renounce the ways of a householder and become a recluse in the forest, Yajnavalkya called Maitreya and said to her: 'It is time for me to give up this worldly life, so let me make a final settlement with you and Katyayani.'

But Maitreya replied: 'Even if the whole world and all its wealth were mine would that bring me immortality?'

'No,' said Yajnavalkya, 'your life would be as that of any other who had many riches. But such wealth will never buy you immortality.'

'So what is the use of having something which

will not bring me immortality?' replied Maitreya. 'Give me instead, my lord, the benefit of your knowledge.'

'You have always been dear to me, Maitreya, but now through asking this, you have become even more dear. I shall teach you, my beloved, but listen very carefully to what I say.'

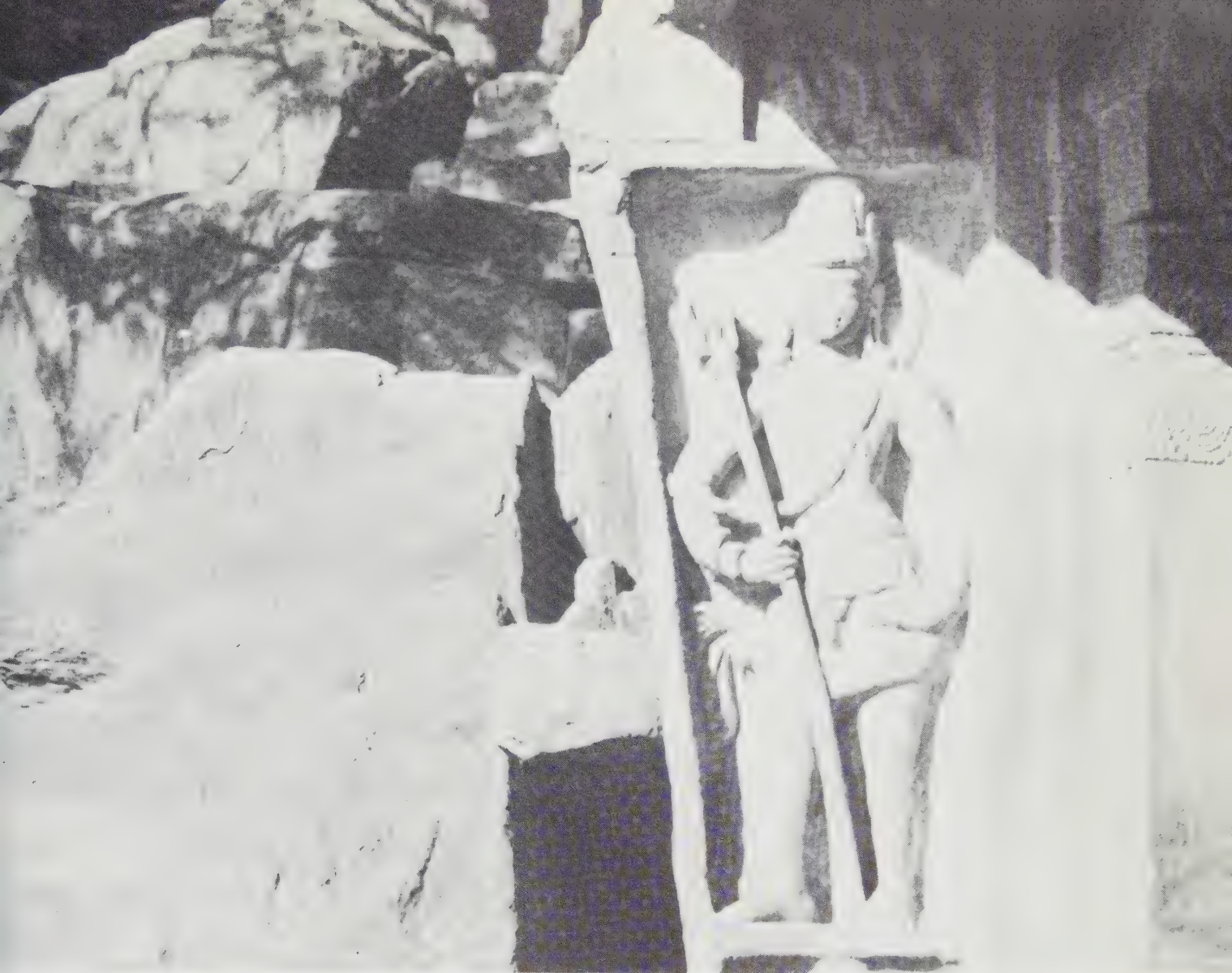
'Verily, it is not for the sake of the husband that the husband is dear,
but for the sake of the Self.

And it is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is dear,

but for the sake of the Self.

And it is not for the sake of the sons that the sons are dear,

but for the sake of the Self.



And it is not for the sake of wealth that wealth
is dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
And it is not for the sake of cattle that cattle
are dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
And it is not for the sake of the priest that the
priest is dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
And it is not for the sake of the many worlds
that the many worlds are dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
And it is not for the sake of the gods that the
gods are dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
And it is not for the sake of the Vedas that the

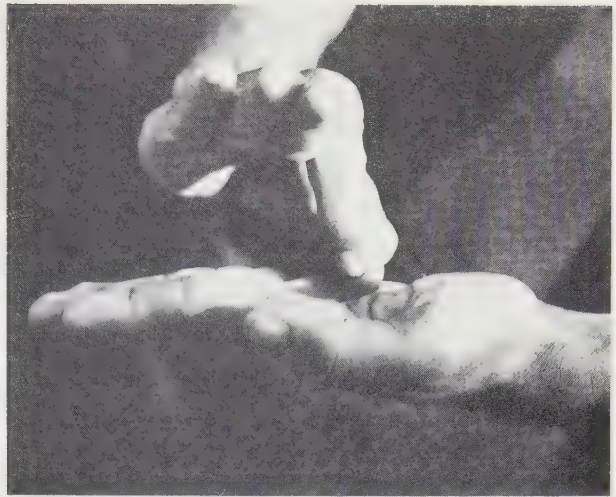
Vedas are dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
And it is not for the sake of the beings that the
beings are dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
And it is not for the sake of the All that the All
is dear,
but for the sake of the Self.
Indeed, my beloved, it is the Self that should be
seen, the self that should be heard, the Self
that should be reflected upon, and the Self
that should be known.
And when the Self has been seen, when the Self
has been heard, when the Self has been
reflected upon, and when the Self has been
known, then everything is known.'





Life in ancient India was divided into four stages: that of the brahmacharin, the student of the Vedas; that of the grihastha, the householder with a family and worldly commitments; that of the vanaprastha, the recluse who retired to the tranquility of the forest; and that of the sannyasin, the sage wandering and teaching throughout the land. Traditionally, having fulfilled the requirements of each stage, a man ended his life a liberated being.





Once there lived a young boy called Svetaketu, the son of Uddalaka Aruna. One day his father said to him, 'My son, you are now twelve and the time has come for you to go and study the sacred teachings, for it is the tradition in our family that everyone should study the Vedas and become a true Brahmin.'

When he was twenty-four Svetaketu returned home having studied all the Vedas. He was full of conceit and arrogantly thought he knew everything. 'Svetaketu,' his father said, 'you are conceited and arrogant and think yourself well read, but did you ever ask for that knowledge by which one hears that which cannot be heard, sees that which cannot be seen, and knows that which cannot be known?'

'Whatever is that teaching, sir?' the son enquired.

'Very well, my son. By knowing one lump of clay you know the essence of all things made of clay, their differences being only in name and form. By knowing one nugget of gold you know the essence of all things made of gold, their differences being only in name and form. By knowing one piece of iron you know the essence of all things made of iron, their differences being only in name and form. In the same way, my son, through this knowledge you gain the essence of all knowledge.'

'My venerable teachers could not have known of this for if they had they would surely have passed it on to me. So could you, dear father, teach me?' Svetaketu asked.

‘Very well, my son. In the beginning there was pure Being, one without a second. Some people, however, believe that in the beginning there was only non-Being, one without a second, and that non-Being gave birth to Being. But how could this be? How could Being arise from non-Being? No, my son, it was pure Being, one without second, that existed in the beginning.’

‘Pure Being, thinking to itself, “May I become many, May I take form,” created light. Light, thinking to itself, “May I become many, May I take form,” created the waters. And the waters thinking, to themselves, “May I become many, May I take form,” created the earth. In this way the whole universe was born from pure Being.

That Being which is the subtlest essence of everything, the supreme reality, the Self of all that exists, THAT ART THOU, Svetaketu.’





‘Please sir, tell me more of this teaching,’ said the boy.

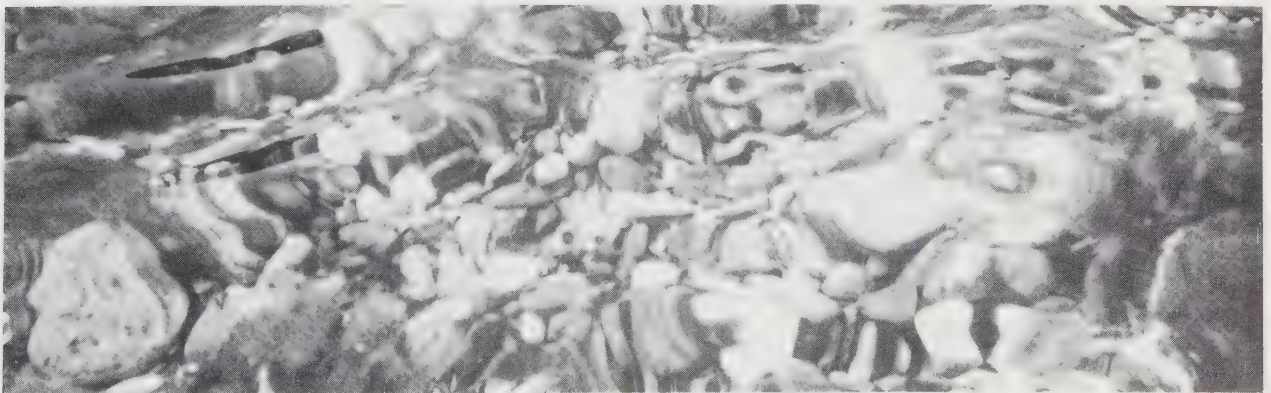
‘Very well, my son. When the bees collect the nectar from many different plants, blending them all into one honey, the individual nectars no longer think, “I come from this plant”, “I come from that plant.” In the same way, my son, all creatures when they contact Being lose all awareness of their individual natures. But when they return from Being they regain their individuality. Whether tiger, or lion, or wolf, or boar, or worm, or fly, or gnat, or even mosquito, they become themselves again.

‘And that Being which is the subtlest essence of everything, the supreme reality, the Self of all that exists, THAT ART THOU, Svetaketu.’

‘Please sir, tell me more of this teaching,’ said the boy.

‘Very well, my son. All rivers, whether they flow to the East or to the West, have arisen from the sea and will return to it again. Yet once these rivers have merged with the sea they no longer think, “I am this river,” “I am that river.” In the same way, my son, all these creatures, when they merge again with Being, do not remember that they originally arose from Being and wound their individual ways through life.

‘Now that Being which is the subtlest essence of everything, the supreme reality, the Self of all that exists, THAT ART THOU, Svetaketu.’





'Please sir, tell me more of this teaching,' said the boy.

'Very well, my son. If you were to chop at the root of this great tree, it would bleed but it would not die. If you were to chop at its trunk, it would bleed but it would not die. If you were to chop at its branches, it would bleed but it would not die. Permeated by sap, its life energy, the tree stands firm, drinking and enjoying its nourishment.

But if the sap withdraws from one of the branches then that branch withers. If it withdraws from a second branch then that branch withers. If it withdraws from a third branch then that branch also withers. If the sap withdraws from the whole tree then the whole tree withers and dies. In just the same way, my son, when the Self withdraws from the body the body dies, though the Self lives on.

And that Being which is the subtlest essence of everything, the supreme reality, the Self of all that exists, THAT ART THOU, Svetaketu.'

'Please sir, tell me more of this teaching,' said the boy.

'Very well my son. Go and pick a fig from that banyan tree.'

'Here you are, sir.'

'Split it open and tell me what you see inside.'

'Many tiny seeds, sir.'

'Take one of them and split it open and tell me what you see inside.'

'Nothing at all, sir.'

Then the father said, 'The subtlest essence of the fig appears to you as nothing, but, believe me my son, from that very nothing this mighty banyan tree has arisen.

That Being which is the subtlest essence of everything, the supreme reality, the Self of all that exists, THAT ART THOU, Svetaketu.'



'Please sir, tell me more of this teaching,' said the boy.

'Very well my son. Take this salt, put it in a glass of water and come to me again tomorrow morning.'

Svetaketu did as he was asked and in the morning his father said to him, 'Bring me that salt which you put in the water last night.' The boy looked for the salt but could not find it since it had all dissolved. So the father said, 'Take a sip from the top. How does it taste?'

'Salty, sir.'

'Pour some away and take a sip from the middle. How does it taste now?'

'Salty, sir.'

'Pour some more away and take a sip from the bottom. How does that taste?'

'Still salty, sir.'

'Now throw it all away and come here.'

The boy did as he was told, saying, 'Every drop tasted of salt.'

'Similarly, my son, you may not perceive pure Being permeating everything but in truth it is there. That Being which is the subtlest essence of everything, the supreme reality, the Self of all that exists, THAT ART THOU, Svetaketu.'





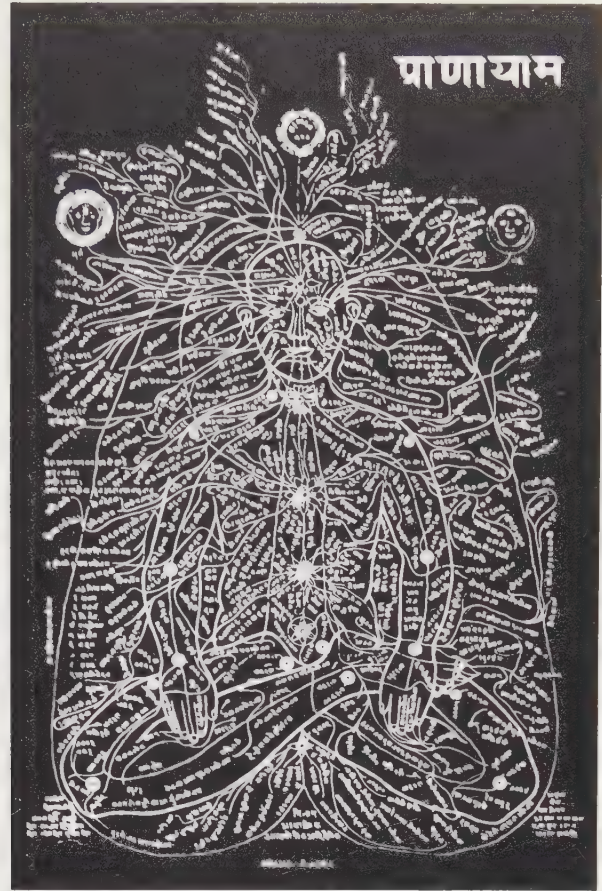
'Please sir, tell me more of this teaching.'
said the boy.

'Very well, my son. Imagine a man who has been blindfolded, led far away from home, and left in the wilderness. He will wander about hopelessly in any direction crying out, "I have been blindfolded and abandoned here." But if someone were to remove the blindfold and point out to him the general direction of home, then by using his intelligence he could eventually get there by asking his way from village to village. In the same way a person who has found a teacher who can show him the right way to liberation knows that he is on the right path and will eventually reach enlightenment.

For that Being which is the subtlest essence of everything, the supreme reality, the Self of all that exists, THAT ART THOU, Svetaketu.'

6.I.1–6.II.4 & 6.IX.1–6.XIV.3





We generally think of the human nervous system as a web of physical nerves extending from the brain throughout the physical body. Yogis, on the other hand, relying more upon subjective and intuitive experience than physical examination, have discovered a subtle nervous system consisting of a complex pattern of minute energy channels, known as nadis. Whereas our model is good at accounting for physical activity in the body and for sensory experience, the yogic nervous system is more concerned with subtle energy systems of which we are still very ignorant, and is better suited to explaining the mechanics of higher states of consciousness.

The principal nadi is the sushumna running from the perineum, up the spine, to the top of the head. Linked to the sushumna are a number of energy centres, called chakras (literally 'wheels'). Although some schools differ on the

relative importance and location of the chakras, there are generally held to be seven principal ones. These are located at the perineum, the base of the genitals, the solar plexus area, the centre of the chest, the throat, the middle of the forehead, and at the crown of the head.

The entire system of nadis and chakras is often referred to as the subtle body, and its study is the domain of Tantra. The subtle body is seen as a microcosm of the many realms of creation. Each chakra is represented as a lotus and has its own colour, mantras, and presiding gods and goddesses. The petals of each lotus are related to different devatas (minor deities) and to specific sounds – each petal of the first six chakras being associated with a different letter of the sanskrit alphabet.

Within the bottom chakra the psychic energy Kundalini lies dormant. Tantric texts describe her as the serpent power, 'luminous as lightning, shining in the hollow of this lotus like a chain of brilliant lights'. Kundalini is awoken through meditation and pranayama. She rises up the sushumna, enlivening each chakra, and purifying the nadis related to them. When she reaches the crown chakra, the thousand-petalled lotus, she unites with consciousness, the male aspect of creation, and from their union a sublime nectar flows down in blissful waves throughout the body. This purification of the subtle body is the basis of enlightenment.

According to an ancient story, Nachiketas, the son of a poor Brahmin, is dissatisfied with the gifts his father has offered to the sacrificial priests, and insists that he be offered instead. His father, in a rage, cries, 'Alright then, to Yama, the King of Death, I give you!'

Arriving at the realm of Yama, Nachiketas finds him absent and has to wait, unfed, for three days and nights. Yama, on his return, grants the boy three wishes in recompense. Nachiketas' third wish is to know how the cycle of death and rebirth may be overcome. The following passages are part of the King of Death's reply.

Āama said:

‘Let us light the fire of Nachiketas,
the fire of knowledge,
which, once kindled, is the bridge to
immortality.

And let us know the supreme imperishable
Brahman,
the farther shore of life,
the end of all our seeking.

Imagine the Self as the rider in a chariot.

The body is the chariot,
the intellect the driver,
and the mind the reins.

The senses are the horses,
and their objects are the road.

The Self, say the wise,
when combined with the senses and the mind
becomes ‘the enjoyer’.

When a man lacks wisdom
his mind is always restless,
and his senses are wild horses
dragging the driver hither and thither.

But when he is full of wisdom
his mind is collected,
and his senses become tamed horses
obedient to the driver’s will.

He who lacks wisdom,
whose mind is unsteady,
whose actions are not pure,
He never reaches the highest state,
suffering rebirth again and again.

But he who abounds in wisdom,
whose mind is steady,
who is ever pure,
He reaches the highest state,
from which there is no return.

He who has wisdom as his driver,
and his mind’s reins controlled,
He reaches the end of the journey,
the supreme abode of Vishnu,
the all-pervading.

Subtler than the organs of perception are the
senses.

Subtler than this is the mind.

Subtler than this is the intellect.

Subtler than this is the self.

Subtler than this is the underlying cause of all.

And subtler still is the supreme Self.

There is nothing subtler than this.

This is the Absolute.

This is the end of all suffering.

The Self lies hidden,

And is not openly displayed.

But It is known to those of subtle sight,
whose vision is purified and clear.

The wise man’s senses are governed by his mind.

His mind is governed by his intellect.

His intellect is governed by his active self.

And his active self is governed by the silent Self.

Wake up!

Seek the Truth!

Rise above ignorance!

Search out the best teachers,

and through them find the Truth.

But beware!

“The path is narrow,” the sages warn,

“sharp as a razor’s edge,

most difficult to tread.”

III.2 – III.14



The King of Death continued:

‘The pure Self cannot be found
through studying the Vedas,
nor through learned argument,
nor through much hearing of the scriptures.
The Self is known only to those It chooses.
To them alone it reveals its true nature.

The Self is not revealed to anyone
whose ways have not changed,
whose senses are not still,
who has not found samadhi,
whose mind is not at peace.

For who really knows what the Self is,
The One to whom the priests and the warriors
are but food,
and death is but a sauce?’

II.23 – II.25

‘The Self is not to be seen,
for It has no visible form.
Yet, when the mind becomes clear,
and the heart becomes pure,
Then can the Self be known.
And those who know It enjoy eternity.’

When the five senses are stilled,
and thinking has ceased,
when even the intellect does not stir,
Then, say the wise, one reaches the highest state.

This state,
in which the senses are steady and at rest,
is known as Yoga, the state of union.

The attention is no longer distracted,
for Yoga is the end and the beginning of all.

Speaking, thinking, looking,
— none of these can reveal the Self.
It lies beyond the senses,
And can only be understood by he who knows
“It is”.

First accept that the Self exists,
and accept that it can be known.
Then Its real nature is open to experience.

When all the heart’s desires are exhausted,
immortality is born.
He enjoys the unboundedness of Brahman,
— even while in this body.

When all the knots of the heart
have been released,
Then truly a mortal becomes immortal.
Thus is the teaching.

The heart has one hundred and one nadis.
One of them, the *amrita nadi*, rises to the crown.
Through this one rises to immortality:
The others lead to lesser worlds.

The cosmic spirit shines constantly within the
heart,
a white light the size of a thumb.
It should be carefully extracted,
as the stem of a reed is steadily drawn from
its sheath.
This is the Pure,
the Eternal.
Yes, This is the Pure,
the Eternal.

Nachiketas received this teaching and the whole
art of meditation from the King of Death.
He was freed from all impurities, and even
from death itself. Thus he realised Brahman.

And so may anyone who knows this truth
about the Self.

VI.9 – VI.18





The word prana, coming from the root AN, to breathe, signifies not only human breath but the breath of the Universe, the life force. It is thus similar to chi in Taoism, ruach in Judaism, and pneuma in Greek thought. It is the tendency of the unmanifest to vibrate and take form. Prana is the energy behind both mind and matter.

On entering the human nervous system Prana is divided into the five types of prana mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. These flow through the nadis enlivening both the gross and subtle bodies:

apana, 'the downward breath', circulates through the bottom chakra, and controls nutrition and excretion in the gross body;

vyana, 'the diffusing breath', emanating from the second chakra, pervades and nourishes the entire body;

samana, 'the assimilating breath', works through the navel chakra and governs the processes of digestion;

prana, 'the forward breath', is associated with the heart chakra and governs breathing;

udana, 'the ascending breath', operates through the throat chakra influencing the diaphragm and respiration.

And, as this selection from the Kaushitaki shows, Prana also manifests as consciousness itself.



Pratardana, the son of Devadasa, through courage and persistence attained the cherished realm of Indra, the ruler of Heaven.

Indra greeted him: 'Pratardana, you may ask for any gift you wish.'

Pratardana replied, 'Please choose for me. Give me whatever you think will be of the greatest benefit to mankind.'

'A god does not make choices for a mortal,' Indra said, 'you must choose for yourself.'

'If the choice is left to me it can be no real gift,' replied Pratardana.

So Indra, being Truth itself, remained faithful to his word, saying to Pratardana, 'Then know me alone. This indeed I consider the best for mankind, that he should know me. I slew Vishvarupa, the three-headed son of Tvashtri, the Shaper. I delivered the Arunmukhas, the ascetics, to the wolves. Breaking many pacts, I killed Prahlada's demons in the sky, I killed Pauloma's demons in the air, and I killed Kalakanja's demons on the earth. And not a single hair of the body I had then was harmed.

In the same way, he who knows me cannot be harmed whatever he may do. Even if he steals, kills an unborn child, kills his mother or his father, he does not pale with fear.'





And Indra continued:

‘I am Prana, the life breath,
and the consciousness in all beings.
Glorify me, for I am life and I am immortality.
Life is breath and breath is life.
So long as there is breath in the body,
there is life.
From Prana comes the nectar of life,
and from consciousness comes clear understanding.
He who glorifies me as the life breath,
in this life enjoys fullness
and in the next immortality, eternity.’

‘It is taught,’ said Pratardana, ‘that each sense
has its own prana, each one stemming from
the one Prana.
Otherwise how could the eyes see,
how could the ears hear,
how could the voice speak,
or how could the mind think?
These sense pranas are all united in Prana.
So when the voice speaks, it is Life speaking.
When the eye sees, it is Life seeing.
When the ear hears, it is Life hearing.
When the mind thinks, it is Life thinking.
And when the breath breathes, it is Life
breathing.’



'Yes, it is so,' said Indra,
'There is, however, something superior to the
five pranas.
One can live without speech,
for there are the dumb.
One can live without sight,
for there are the blind.
One can live without hearing,
for there are the deaf.
One can live without thought,
for there are the simple.
One can live without limbs,
for there are the crippled.
But one cannot live without breath.

It is Prana alone, as the conscious Self,
that breathes life into this body.
So to Prana we should sing all hymns of praise.
Prana is the essence of the life breath.
And what is the life breath?
It is pure consciousness.
And what is pure consciousness?
It is the life breath.'

III.1 – III.3



When consciousness governs speech,
through speech one knows all names.
When consciousness governs breath,
through breath one knows all smells.
When consciousness governs the eyes,
through the eyes one knows all forms.
When consciousness governs the ears,
through the ears one knows all sounds.
When consciousness governs the tongue,
through the tongue one knows all tastes.
When consciousness governs the hands,
through the hands one knows all action.
When consciousness governs the body,
through the body one knows pleasure and
pain.
When consciousness governs the genitals,
through the genitals one knows bliss, delight
and procreation.
When consciousness governs the feet,
through the feet one knows all movement.
When consciousness governs the mind,
through the mind one knows all thoughts.

For truly, without consciousness speech would
not reveal any name at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that name.'
For truly, without consciousness breath would
not reveal any smell at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that smell.'
For truly, without consciousness the eyes would
not reveal any form at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that form.'
For truly, without consciousness the ears would
not reveal any sound at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that sound.'
For truly, without consciousness the tongue
would not reveal any taste at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that taste.'
For truly, without consciousness the hands
would not reveal any action at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that action.'

For truly, without consciousness the body
would not reveal any pleasure or pain.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that pleasure or pain.'
For truly, without consciousness the genitals
would not reveal any bliss, delight or pro-
creation.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that bliss, delight or procreation.'
For truly, without consciousness the feet would
not reveal any movement at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that movement.'
For truly, without consciousness the mind
would not reveal any thought at all.
We say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not
notice that thought.'

It is not just speech we should seek to
 understand,
 we should know the Speaker.
 It is not just smells we should seek to
 understand,
 we should know the Smeller.
 It is not just forms we should seek to understand,
 we should know the Seer.
 It is not just sounds we should seek to
 understand,
 we should know the Hearer.
 It is not just tastes we should seek to understand,
 we should know the Taster.
 It is not just action we should seek to understand,
 we should know the Actor.
 It is not just pleasure and pain we should seek to
 understand,
 we should know the Experiencer.
 It is not just bliss, delight and procreation we
 should seek to understand,
 we should know the Enjoyer.
 It is not just movement we should seek to
 understand,
 we should know the Mover.
 It is not just thought we should seek to
 understand,
 we should know the Thinker.

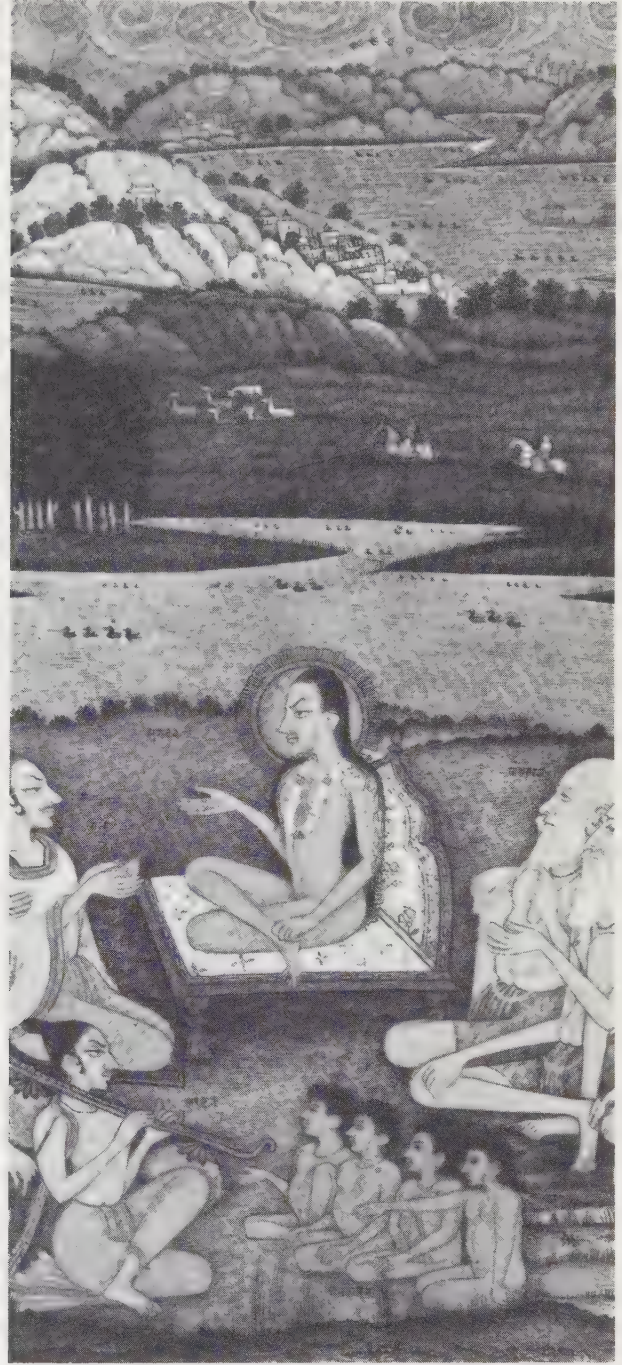
These ten elements of existence
 depend upon Intelligence.
 And the ten elements of intelligence
 depend upon Existence.
 For, truly, if there were no elements of existence
 there could be no elements of intelligence.
 And if there were no elements of intelligence
 there could be no elements of existence.
 From either on its own no form is possible.
 These ten elements are in reality one whole.
 Just as in a wheel
 the sections of the rim are joined to the
 spokes,
 and the spokes unite in the hub.
 So these ten elements of existence
 join with ten elements of intelligence.
 And these ten elements of intelligence
 are united in Prana.
 This same Prana is itself the knower,

 bliss, timeless and immortal.
 Good deeds do not improve Him.
 Evil does not diminish Him.
 For He is the cause of right in those who rise
 and wrong in those who fall.
 He is the sovereign and protector of the Universe.
 He is the Lord of all.
 'I am He!'
 Know this,
 'I am He!'

III.6 – III.8







Brahman is sat-chit-ananda. It is sat, eternal and unchanging. It is chit, pure consciousness, the Self. And it is also ananda, bliss. Bliss is the nature of Brahman, and the experience of Brahman is blissful. The expansion of bliss is the purpose of creation.

In the beginning the world was not.
From non-existence came Existence.
From itself Existence created the Self.
Thus it is called the Self-Made.

Truly, what that Self-Made is
is the essence of existence.
Truly, tasting the essence one rejoices in bliss.
Indeed, who could breathe,
who could live,
were there not this all-pervading bliss.
Truly, it is this essence that bestows bliss.

Truly, when a person discovers a foundation of
fearlessness in That,
within the invisible,
the formless, the unlimited,
the self-sufficient,
Then he has found true fearlessness.
If, however, he makes in this unity even the smallest
gap
fear is born.
To him who knows not Brahman
Brahman's form brings fear.

There is more to hear of this:

From fear of Him the wind blows
From fear of Him the sun rises,
From fear of Him Agni burns,
Indra rules
and Death hurries on.



Now follows the teaching concerning bliss:

Imagine a young man,

pure, quick, well-read, resolute and healthy,
having all the wealth of the world.

This is one unit of human bliss.

One hundred times greater than human bliss is
one bliss of the lower Gandharvas

— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of the
lower Gandharvas is one bliss of the higher
Gandharvas

— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of the
higher Gandharvas is one bliss of the
Fathers in Paradise

— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of the
Fathers in Paradise is one bliss of the gods
who were born divine

— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of the
gods who were born divine is one bliss of
the gods who gained their divinity through
good deeds

— and no less than this is the bliss of he who is
learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of the
gods who gained their divinity through
good deeds is one bliss of the higher gods

— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of the
higher gods is one bliss of Indra, the ruler
of the gods,

— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of
Indra, the ruler of the gods, is one bliss of
Brihaspati, the teacher of the gods,
— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of
Brihaspati, the teacher of the gods, is one
bliss of Prajapati, the father of all,
— and no less than this is the bliss of he who
is learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

One hundred times greater than the bliss of Prajapati,
the father of all, is one bliss of Brahma, the
creator,
— and no less than this is the bliss of he who is
learned in the Vedas and not smitten by
desire.

He who is the self in man
And He who is the self in the sun
He is one.

Whoever knows this, when he leaves this world,
passes through the self of matter,
through the self of life,
through the self of mind,
through the self of intelligence
and reaches the self of bliss.

There is more to hear of this:

That from which words turn back,
and the mind cannot grasp,
that is It.

He who enjoys the bliss of Brahman
has no fear whatsoever.

He is not worried by the thoughts:
'Why have I not done what is right?'
'Why have I done what is wrong?'

He who knows Brahman escapes from the
clutches of both.

Thus is the Upanishad.

Bhrigu, the bright one, approached his father, Varuna, the lord of the waters, and said: 'Sir, teach me about Brahman.'

Varuna taught him of matter, life, sight, hearing, mind and speech. Then he added: 'Seek to know that from which all these are born, by which they are sustained, and into which they return.'

Bhrigu retired and meditated, and through meditation he saw that matter is Brahman. For, indeed, from matter all beings are born, by matter they are sustained, and into matter they again return.

Having realized this he again approached his father, and said: 'Noble Sir, teach me of Brahman.'

Varuna replied: 'Seek to know Brahman through meditation, for Brahman is meditation.'

Bhrigu retired and meditated, and through meditation he saw that Life is Brahman. For, indeed, from Life all beings are born, by Life they are sustained, and into Life they again return.

Having realised this he again approached his father, and said: 'Honoured Sir, teach me of Brahman.'

Varuna replied: 'Seek to know Brahman through meditation, for Brahman is meditation.'

Bhrigu retired and meditated, and through meditation he saw that mind is Brahman. For, indeed, from mind all beings are born, by mind they are sustained, and into mind they again return.

Having realised this he again approached his father, and said: 'Venerable Sir, teach me of Brahman.'

Varuna replied: 'Seek to know Brahman through meditation, for Brahman is meditation.'

Bhrigu retired and meditated, and through meditation he saw that intelligence is Brahman. For, indeed, from intelligence all beings are born, by intelligence they are sustained, and into intelligence they again return.

Having realised this he again approached his father, and said: 'Revered Sir, teach me of Brahman.'

Varuna replied: 'Seek to know Brahman through meditation, for Brahman is meditation.'

Bhrigu retired and meditated, and through meditation he saw that Brahman is bliss. For, truly,

FROM BLISS ALL BEINGS ARE BORN,
BY BLISS THEY ARE SUSTAINED,
AND INTO BLISS THEY AGAIN RETURN.

This wisdom that Varuna taught Bhrigu is the Highest. He who knows it becomes established in the Highest. He becomes the possessor and enjoyer of riches, great in fame, great in offspring, great in cattle and great in the splendour of sacred wisdom.

II.7 – III.6







According to Sankhya, one of the six systems of Indian philosophy, the cosmos can be divided into two complementary principles: Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha is the Cosmic Spirit. He is the subjective aspect of Existence, the essence of mind. Prakriti is Nature. She is the primal substance, the undifferentiated matter-energy from which the entire objective creation arises.

The constituents of Prakriti are the three gunas (literally 'strands of a rope') — rajas, tamas and sattva. These are the three basic tendencies inherent in all creation, and are associated with the Indian deities Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. The undifferentiated Prakriti is the state of equilibrium of the three gunas. When this equilibrium is disturbed the universe takes form, and in every manifestation one or other of the three gunas predominates.

Rajas is the dynamic, progressive, creative influence. Tamas is the retarding influence, checking the impulse of rajas. And sattva is the sustaining influence which integrates and harmonises the activities of rajas and tamas.

Something in which sattva dominates will tend to show the qualities of purity and stability more than those of passion or lethargy. Meditation increases sattva, and the life of a yogi is traditionally said to be sattvic.

The play of the gunas is known as maya. Although maya is often translated as 'illusion', this is misleading. The word can be derived from the root MA, meaning 'to limit' or 'to divide', in which case it has the meaning of 'that which is limited' or 'that which is divided', i.e. the manifest world of duality and distinctions.

Alternatively, ma can mean 'not', and maya becomes 'that which is not'. From the point of view of the Absolute the relative 'is not' because it has no permanence and no independent existence. Moreover, as the Absolute remains transcendent, even while manifest, the relative 'is not' the Absolute — it is but a part of the whole — in the same way that the waves of the ocean 'are not' the ocean. This does not mean that the part is an illusion. It is real, just as the waves of the ocean are real. For the enlightened person, however, the relative world on its own is not the whole truth. The whole truth is the unity of both Absolute and relative.





'Brahman, Thou art One.
Though formless,
 through Thine own power,
 and for Thine own unfathomable purpose,
 Thou givest rise to the many forms.
Thou createst the whole Universe from Thyself,
 and, at the end of time,
 drawest it back within Thyself.
O Brahman, Give us clear understanding.

Thou art Agni, the fire.
Thou art Aditya, the sun.
Thou art Vayu, the wind.
Thou art Chandrama, the moon.
Thou art the brilliant stars.
Thou art Hiranyagarbha, the golden womb of
 creation.
Thou art the cosmic waters.

Thou art Prajapati, the Lord of all creation.

Thou art woman,
Thou art man.
Thou art the youth,
Thou art the maiden.
Thou art the old man tottering along with his
 stick.
Having taken form, Thou facest in every
 direction.

Thou art the deep blue butterfly,
Thou art the parrot, green with red eyes.
Thou art the father of lightning.
Thou art the seasons and the seas.
Unborn,
 Thou art everywhere,
And all that is, is born from Thee.'



'Of what use are the Vedas to those who have
not experienced that supreme eternal Being,
from whom the Vedas come,
and in whom the Devas dwell?
Only those whose being flows with Thee
find eternal joy.

For all the sacred texts,
all the holy offerings,
all the ceremonies,
and all the rituals;
the past, the present, and the future;
all the Vedas speak of,
and this whole world,
Are all projections of Thee,
imperishable Brahman,
conjured by Maya, the mother of illusion.
And through the art of Maya,
we are charmed by her illusion.

Know that all of Nature is but a magic theatre,
That the great Mother is the master magician.
And that this whole world is peopled by her
many parts.

Thou art the source of every source,
from whom all this emerges,

and into whom this all returns.
Thou art the powerful one,
the great benefactor,
resplendent and adorable,
In whom we find unending peace.

Thou who art creator and sustainer of the
Gods,
the ruler of all,
Rudra, destroyer of ignorance,
the great seer,
witness to the birth of the golden womb,
We beg of Thee clear sight.

What god should we worship?

Worship him who is Lord of all the gods,
in whom the whole creation rests,
He who governs both man and beast.

By knowing Him,
who is subtler than the subtlest,
the still centre of all activity,
the fashioner of all forms,
enfolding the Universe in his embrace,
By knowing Him as Love,
we find eternal peace.





‘Whoever lives in the world of change,
the world of the three gunas,
acts for the sake of action’s fruits,
and by these fruits is bound to act again.
Life after life the soul takes on new forms,
according to its qualities,
And thus embodied reaps its due reward.

Linked with ego and desires the soul appears as
a light the size of a thumb.
But when linked with the Self and discrimina-
tion it shines like the point of a pin.

Know the soul to be only
the hundredth part of
the hundredth part of
the tip of a hair.
Yet within it is infinity.

It is not female.
It is not male.
It is not neuter.
Yet, in assuming a body, the soul takes on such
forms.

Through the spell of seeing, desiring, touching
and uniting, a soul is born.
Through food and drink it grows.
And, depending on its deeds, it is reborn again.

A soul takes many forms,
some coarse, some fine,
according to its gunas,
The body it assumes shaped by its desires.’

V.7 – V.12





'Change, say some of the learned,
is just the nature of things.
Others say it is but the mark of time.
Yet they are all deluded, O radiant Lord,
For it is by Thine own greatness
that the wheel of the world revolves.

This whole world lies in Thee.
Thou art the highest intelligence,
the master of the gunas,
the maker of time.
Thou knowest all.
Under Thy command Thy creation unfolds;
space, air, water, fire and earth evolve.

Having created the world, Thou retest once
again.
Thou art united with the elements,
And Thou art united with the One.
From the One are born Purusha, the cosmic
spirit,
and Prakriti, the mother of nature.
From them are born the gunas.
From these three come earth, water, fire, air
and space,
together with mind, intellect and ego.
Thou art united with Time,
and the subtle qualities of man.

Without the gunas there can be no creation.
With them Thou hast formed all that is.
And yet, Thou art apart from it,
— even when dissolving all that Thou hast
made.

Thou art the seed of all,
the source of primal forces.
Thou art beyond past, present and future.
Thou art undivided.
Thou art the adorable God of many forms.
Thou art the origin of all,
living within our very minds.

Beyond the branching tree of life,
beyond time and form,
art Thou from whom all this evolves.
The bringer of good,

The banisher of evil,
The Lord of power.
May we know Thee as our own Self,
the imperishable support of all.

May we know the Lord of lords,
most brilliant of the deities,
Master of the masters,
the highest one.
May we know Thee, the most adorable God,
Lord of the Universe.

We cannot see Thee acting,
nor Thy means of action
Nowhere can we find Thy superior,
nor even Thy equal.
Thy mighty power is legion.
Thy nature is intelligence and strength.

None can be Thy master.
No-one is Thy Lord.
Never can an image capture Thee.
Thou rulest the rulers of the senses,
Yet Thou hast neither ruler nor creator.

O Lord,
who hast woven the web of the
world from Thyself,
as a spider spins its threads,
Lead us to Brahman.

Thou art the one God, hidden in all.
Thou art everywhere, the inner Self of all,
the seer of deeds, dwelling in all,
the uninvolved witness, knowing all,
pure consciousness, free of all qualities.

Remaining still, Thou movest all that moves.
Thou makest the one seed many.
The wise know Thee as their own Self,
to them, and no-one else, belongs eternal bliss.



Thou art the Eternal among eternal,
the consciousness within all minds,
the Unity in diversity,
the end of all desiring.
Understanding and experience of Thee
dissolve all limitations.

Thou art not lit by the light of the sun,
nor by the light of the moon,
nor by stars,
nor by lightning,
and much less still by fire.
It is only through Thy brilliance that all these
others shine,
It is by Thy light this Universe is lit.

The one 'I am', at the heart of creation,
Thou art the light of Life.
Only by knowing Thee can we conquer death.
There is no other way.

Thou who hast fashioned all forms from Thyself,
the knower of all, the one intelligence,
the father of time, the font of all qualities,
the ruler of Purusha and Prakriti,
the lord of the gunas,
Thou, spinning the wheel of life and death,
art the maker of both suffering and its end.

Thou art That, everywhere,
eternally resplendent in Thy glory,
pure consciousness,
the protector of all.
Thou rulest this world forever.
How could there be any other ruler but Thee?

To Thee, who in the beginning created Brahma,
and revealed to him the timeless Vedas,
To Thee I turn, longing for liberation.
To Thee, who through Thy grace,
allows Thyself to be known.



Through the power of meditation
and the grace of God
The wise Shvetashvatara spoke the truth about
Brahman.
He spoke to the most advanced students of the
pure, the supreme.
He spoke of what is pleasing to the company of
seers.

This supreme secret of the Vedanta,
which was taught in earlier times,
Should not be revealed
to him who is not at peace
nor to him who is not a son or a pupil.

To him who has the highest love for God,
and for guru as for God,
To that great soul the truths taught here
shine forth in all their glory.
Yes, to that great soul
they shine forth in all their glory.

OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

VI.1 – VI.24

Thou art the One,
still,
peaceful,
blameless,
pure,
the surest bridge to immortality,
the fire which consumes all suffering.

A man could more easily roll up the sky
like a length of cloth,
than he could end his suffering
without turning to Thee.



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